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The National Operatic and Dramatic Association

15 The Metro Centre
Peterborough
PE2 7UH

T +44 (0) 1733 374 790
E info@noda.org.uk
W www.noda.org.uk

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Registered CIO 1171216 Registered Company 241572

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Welcome to the final edition of NODA Today for 2023, many of you are preparing for pantomime season or getting ready for your next big production. Where has the year gone?

In September, we celebrated the inauguration of our new NODA President, Christine Hunter Hughes,

to whom I send many congratulations with good wishes for her presidential year. You can catch up with Christine's travels on page 42 and don't forget, you can invite her to your next production.

When you receive this edition, booking will be open for NODA Theatre Summer School 2024. We invite you to look through the available courses. Whether you are a seasoned performer, just starting out or looking to increase your groups accessibility, there really is something for everyone.

Over the last 18 months, a vast amount of work has been progressing behind the scenes, working with specialists to evaluate and evolve our member benefits. In the next few months, you will not only see some visual changes in how NODA appears, but also how we interact with our members and the wider theatre world. It really is an exciting time for NODA, some details of which you can read about on page 6.

As we look forward to celebrating our 125th anniversary in 2024, may I take this opportunity, on behalf of everyone to extend best wishes for your upcoming productions and events. Have a Merry Christmas and a happy, successful and peaceful new year.

Ian G. Cox
Chairman of Trustees

NODA Today Editors

National Editor

Rob Williams
editor@noda.org.uk

East Regional Editor

DeeDee Doke
deedee.doke@noda.org.uk

East Midlands Regional Editor

Stuart Bull
stuart.bull@noda.org.uk

London Regional Editor

Jacquie Stedman
jacquie.stedman@noda.org.uk

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North Regional Editor

Emma Coulson
emma.coulson@noda.org.uk

North East Regional Editor

Daniel Powell
daniel.powell@noda.org.uk

North West Regional Editor

Rob Gemmell
rob.gemmell@noda.org.uk

Scotland Regional Editor

Position Vacant
editor@noda.org.uk

South East Regional Editor

Chris Horton
chris.horton@noda.org.uk

South West Regional Editor

Matthew Heaton
matthew.heaton@noda.org.uk

Wales & Ireland Regional Editor

Dee McIlroy
dee.mcilroy@noda.org.uk

West Midlands Regional Editor

Position Vacant
editor@noda.org.uk

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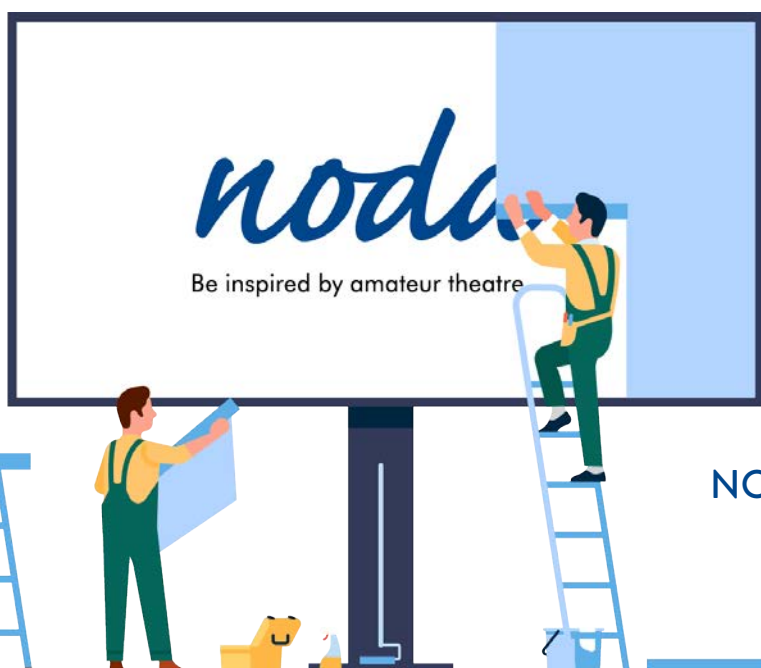
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Photos from our recent National Gala and AGM, including the inauguration of Christine Hunter Hughes as National President.

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Ever wondered who you speak to when you call NODA Head Office - put a face to a name with our Head Office Team.



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NODA of the
Future

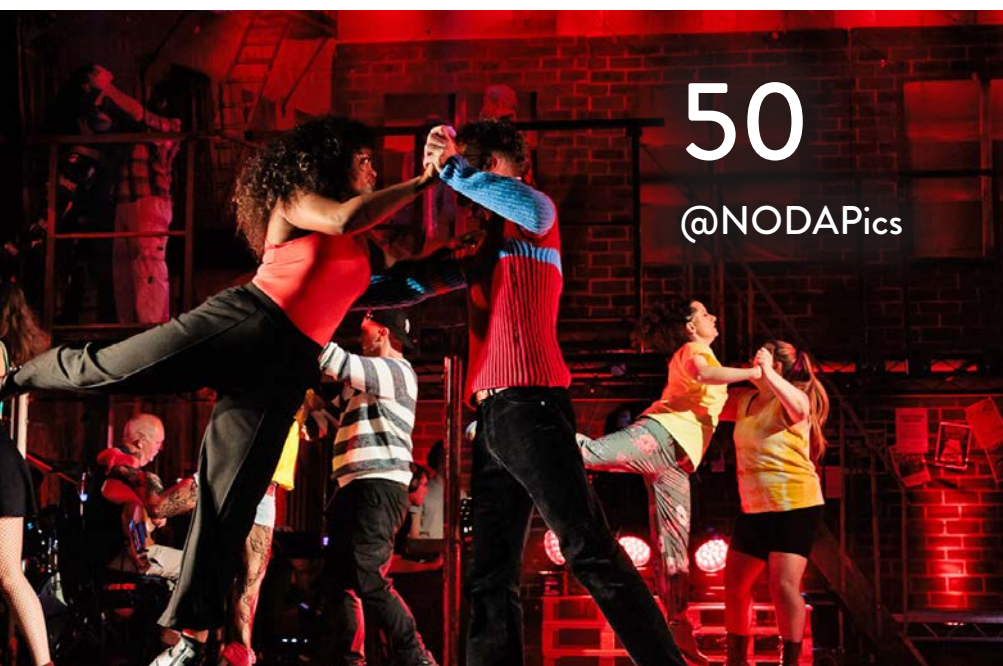


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fans...of amateur
theatre



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Unveiling
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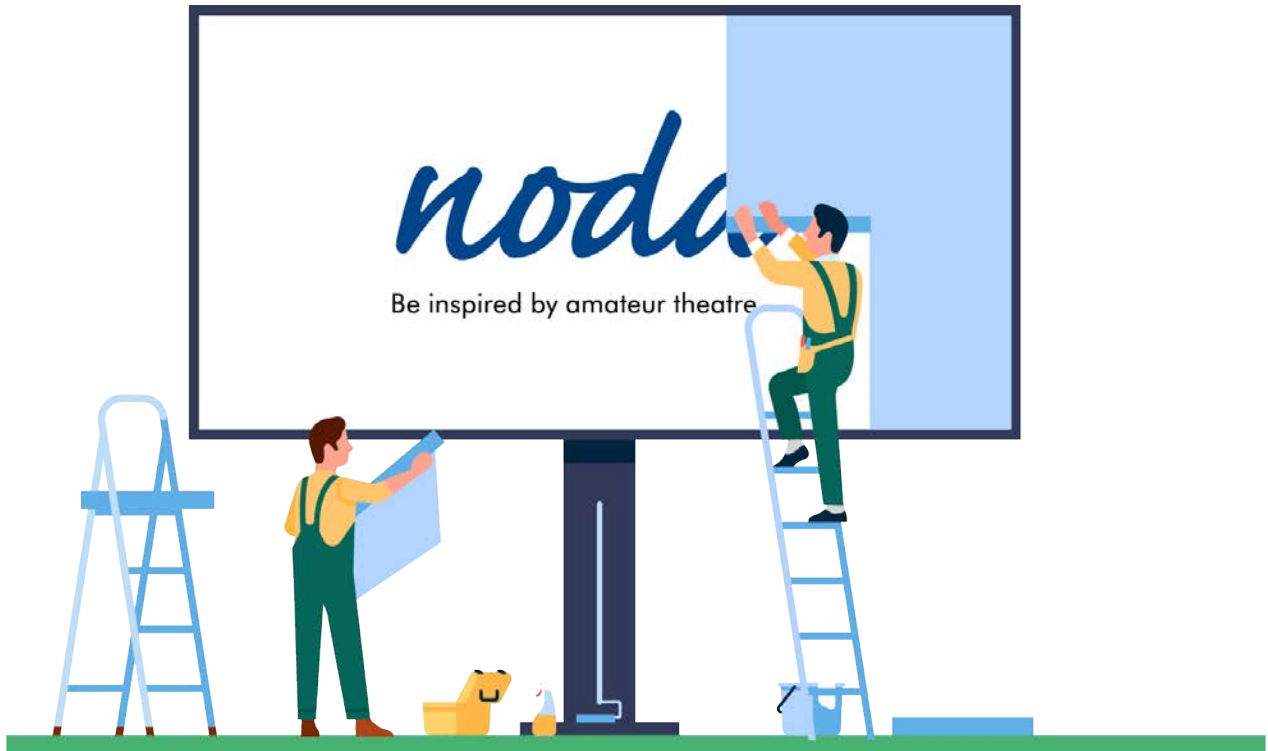


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@NODAPics



NODA of the future



Just over 18 months ago, NODA embarked on an ambitious project to review and develop our membership including the creation of a new framework that will help us to grow and develop. Working with Indigo Ltd, our membership completed an extensive survey on the benefits offered to them and generally about NODA.

Following on from that research, we moved to define our vision and purpose with the support of a Branding Specialist. Their research, from talking to NODA volunteers and external stakeholders, showed that there is a shared view that NODA is 'old-fashioned and unchanging' and it has been suggested that the governance of the organisation works best for those who like how things have historically been done. There is a clear perception that 'change is not a priority' for NODA and that new ideas have not been supported.

Through the new brand strategy, we, as an organisation, will work over the

next 12 to 18 months to implement the strategy and to realise the aims shared throughout the organisation.

NODA is the 'beating heart' of the amateur theatre sector as well as a national organising body. We have a responsibility to capture, playback and celebrate the unique benefits of amateur theatre that are felt by our members and volunteers.

Over the coming years, we must demonstrate that we share our members passion, ambition and joy that is felt and aspired to by all whose lives are enriched by amateur theatre. We must be responsive to opportunities and issues on behalf of our members, demonstrate inclusivity and look to grow the appeal of amateur theatre, and of NODA, to more and different audiences.

In the coming months, we will be working with a creative agency to breathe life into the NODA brand and to realise the new vision and purpose.

This will include:

- Refreshed logo and strapline.
- Updated modern colour palette and fonts.
- Refreshed literature for new and current members.
- A unified identity across regions and 'sub-brands' like NODA Insurance, NODA Theatre Summer School and NODA Safe.

A new website will be launched in summer 2024.

As we move into our 125th year, we are committed to working to make NODA ever-more relevant, visible, and valued as well as building new and better relationships and reputations amongst those who already know us, including existing members, along with those who don't.

70 Years of Music and Drama in Dursley

NODA South West



Nick Lawrence and the DODS cast of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*

Credit: Frankie Telford

Family seems to be one of the secrets of longevity at The DODS!

Earlier this year, The DODS (Dursley) was delighted to welcome special guest NODA President, Nick Lawrence, along with Regional Representative, Dee Way, to its 70th Anniversary production of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* - the most ambitious and expensive production it had ever staged. It was also its most successful, greeted with high acclaim by audiences and high praise from Nick too!

Formed in 1953 as The Woodfield Operatic Society, the group performed *The Pirates of Penzance* less than a year later. It went on to perform a musical annually until 1973, when it combined with The Priory Players to become Dursley Operatic and Dramatic Society, who then performed both a musical and a play each year. In 2021, the society became a charity and formally adopted the name by which it been known locally for years, The DODS. The society has continued to develop over the years and a group of juniors, mostly offspring

of DODS members, was included in a 1979 production of *Hansel and Gretel*.

In 1982, a junior section was started which is still thriving. In 1980, the first pantomime was performed but it was not until 1993, that it became a regular part of the calendar. Now The DODS is very busy producing a play, a pantomime, a musical and a Junior show each year.

Although the society has seen many changes over the years, one thing that has remained constant has been the involvement of whole families, with many instances of 2 generations involved in a show and occasionally 3. But this year, we celebrated the 5th generation of one family being involved with The DODS.

- Frank (Boss) Parsons was one of the stalwarts of Woodfield Operatic Society.

- His daughter Pixie took on the mantle and was a member of the backstage team (she was a keen gardener and whenever trees needed painting as

part of the scenery, Pixie would do it!).

- Pixie's daughter Ann also took on tree painting in addition to committee duties and is now a member of the wardrobe team.

- Ann's daughter Katrina was on stage with juniors and has worked backstage and is currently a member of our chaperone team; and finally,

- Katrina's son Dylan was on stage for the first time as one of the children in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

A Garden Party was held in June to celebrate 70 years, which was attended by members past and present, who had the opportunity to see old photos and programmes and share many reminiscences and stories of 'the old days'. We now look forward to the next 70 years with all the highs and lows they will bring!

Frankie Telford

SATG puts visually impaired audiences in touch with their shows

NODA East



Walking tour of stage



Touch tour of props and costumes

As accessibility to the arts for all rises in priority in the UK, it's become increasingly common to see the use of British Sign Language (BSL) during stage performances in live theatre here, both community and professional. A 'signer' typically stands in view of the stage and audience, their hand gestures and movements conveying the story and characters of the show.

The best signers also communicate the mood and actions underway through their facial expressions, so hearing impaired audience members enjoy as full a theatrical experience as possible. Imagine having to play all of the characters at one time, as many signers do, turning the skill of signing into a performance art as well!

In addition, there's the more technical option of captioning performances, which is posting the dialogue on a screen for observers to read.

But making stage performances accessible for people with sight issues is less common and potentially, more difficult. To open the door to the world of theatre wider to visually impaired theatre goers, the Shakespeare at The George theatre company in Huntingdon, has launched 'touch tours', taking the audience members backstage and behind the scenes before a night's performance. The production last summer was *Much Ado About Nothing*.

As conducted by SATG, with guidance from the appointed 'tour guides', the audience members touched costumes (on hangers or on a flat surface) to get the feel and types of fabrics used, helping them pick up on any significant clues to understanding characters and their backgrounds. Brief dalliances with props and set pieces also were incorporated into such a tour for greater insight into, say, the danger

of a particular weapon or where a character might stand during a scene in which they were hiding from others in the action.

Guiding the pre-show tour were SATG members Lynne Livingstone and Reuben Milne, playing Beatrice and Benedict in the production, which had the added benefit of introducing these special audience members to their voices early on. "We introduced ourselves and took them onto the stage and this was good, because they were going to hear our voices quite a lot," said Milne.

"It's got to be about how you help them get a better understanding of the show," Milne continued. "It's all about storytelling – it's about making sure they get the most out of their experience. So you tell the main bits of the story and the props that either make a difference or get used a lot."

For instance”, Milne explained, “we showed them a couple of swords because it’s about soldiers coming back from the war, we’re wearing our swords quite large, you know”.

For this very first touch tour at SATG, the actors had two visually-impaired visitors to guide. “It was lovely,” Milne said. “Lynne took one, and I took the other, and we took them on slightly different journeys because our characters are on different journeys. And,” he added, “the feedback we got from both people was amazing.”

This first tour had special significance for Livingstone: her day job is at the Royal Institute for the Blind (RNIB), where, she said “one of the things we really strive for...is to have an equitable experience for people with sight loss, so they can enjoy exactly the same thing and have the same experiences in life as their friends, and one of those is theatre.”

Livingstone explained that SATG had been offering captioned performances for people who are hard of hearing, “for some time, and with the success of those performances, we thought it was time to turn our sights, so to speak, to touch tours.” Professional companies in the UK such as the Royal National Theatre and the Old Vic offer them, but, “I don’t think it’s done in amateur theatre very much at all,” she said.

“I’ve been wanting to do a tour for some years with [Shakespeare at the George],” Livingstone said.

Now with one under the company’s belt, she agreed with Milne that it is best if touch tour guides can be the show’s lead actors. Because of their familiarity with the story, they can explain key auditory features such as accents.

Company members themselves were “quite happy, very thrilled” with introducing the concept to their production, as were SATG’s trustees, Livingstone said.

NODA Today - Winter 2023



Touch tour of props and costumes



Captioned Performance

Both Livingstone and Milne expect the public take-up of the tours to increase and to be a constant feature in their productions. Milne said: “The captioning evening has gone on to becoming one of our more popular evenings, and these things grow over time. One of the learnings, I think, is that making these things inclusive is, it doesn’t happen all

of a sudden that you’re flooded with interest. It takes time to build, but it’s worth taking that time.”

DeeDee Doke
East Regional Editor

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One Pantomime - four ways!

NODA London



This year, I was asked by Hemel Hempstead Theatre Company if I could not just direct our annual pantomime, but also if I could look to see if we could produce different versions of the same production to appeal to as many different types of audience members as we could. The society and its committee have worked towards being as inclusive to as many members of the local community for some time now, and the pantomime is the ideal show to try and reach as many individuals and groups as possible. So, when I first set about reviewing a number of potential *Dick Whittington* scripts with my usual criteria (staging, cast size, set requirements etc.) I also kept in mind the potential to adapt all these scripts to accommodate these needs.

We have ended up producing four types of show this year!

So what were they, I hear you ask! Well firstly, the pantomime itself was our version of *Dick Whittington*, set in the present day, but with all the traditional panto elements you've come to know and love. Oh no it isn't! Oh yes it is! The second version had our BSL interpreter incorporated into the show, so they are on hand to help describe the dialogue and the actions as they take place. The third version was our relaxed performance. This helps provide an opportunity for people with autism spectrum conditions, learning disabilities or other sensory communication needs to access the

theatre without judgement. Our final version was the adult performance. This is essentially the same script but with more license for the actors to engage with the audience and be a little riskier with the double-entendres.

Each version required its own emphasis or amendments to the production to make it work for the appropriate audience. In the first instance, to integrate the BSL interpreter into the show, they needed to be included from the start. Giving them visibility not just of the script and the songs, but also the flow and movement within the show, helped them describe what was going on and meant that if things were improvised, they were best placed to accommodate any changes. For our relaxed version, we reduced the lighting and sound levels, kept the house lights on, removed pyrotechnics and strobes, and ensured the FOH team had a very relaxed attitude to people entering and leaving the auditorium whenever they wanted. This helped to put people at ease and allowed them to enjoy the show. Finally, for the adult version it was more about working with the cast to ensure they knew where the script could be flexed and amending a few lines for the more mature audience. The cast themselves were all adults and the audience was also age restricted.

So what are the keys to making all of this work? Firstly, and most importantly, engagement with the cast. Right from the very first auditions, we

had told them of our intentions and how different shows might look or feel for them as performers. Getting them onside with what you are trying to achieve is vital and I was fortunate enough to have an excellent group of performers who wanted to make this work.

The backstage and FOH teams also needed to be involved. For the relaxed show, there were a lot of amendments to lights and sounds. For the BSL performances, we needed to incorporate a platform for the interpreter. For the adult show, we were keen to ensure it was marketed separately in order to differentiate the content. Again, the society is fortunate to have an excellent team in this regard.

Practically speaking, we needed to plan when each type of show would be scheduled. We had two BSL shows and wanted to make sure one was a matinée and one an evening performance. For the relaxed show, we felt a matinée would suit best. For the adults only version, we picked a midweek evening show where adults would likely be a more typical audience.

The result? Four near identical shows but each with a slightly different flavour so that everyone could enjoy the fun. I have always believed that one of the keys to the success of any theatre society is to provide what an audience really wants to see. Give them what they want and they will come. It was my firm belief that an adaptive approach was exactly what our audiences wanted, and seeing the joy in the faces of those who typically might not attend such a show was the very best kind of applause I could ever hope to receive.

Simon Vyvyan - Director



What do the tutors think of the NODA Theatre School?

There were so many joyous things about NODA Theatre Summer School 2023, one of them was welcoming two tutors who were once students at the school and have gone on to enjoy huge success as professional artists and practitioners. As director of the school, I was curious to see how their early experience of NODA Theatre Summer School compared with their 2023 experience, and so checked in with them after they returned from the bubble. Sarah de Tute has been a tutor at numerous summer schools and this year taught the, “So you want to be a Musical Director?” course, this is what she had to say about it:

“Eleven incredibly brave students were put through their paces on the Musical Directors course. My fellow tutor Eoin Corcoran and myself gave them all a look inside the world of a musical director with various skills classes and teaching workshops. They also had the opportunity to work with singers from the school and a professional band. I was overjoyed and deeply proud of each and everyone of them as we watched them all step up, find their voices and achieve great things during the week. It was an incredibly positive time, with delightful light bulb moments, energetic determination, mutual trust and lots of laughter. The rest of the school revealed a fantastic collection of their work in the end of week sharing. The Friday night party was all about glowing in the achievements across the board and of course dancing into the night.”

Chris Tomlinson (Tommo) taught for the first time in 2023. He had this to say about his “Directing Youth Theatre,” course: *“This year’s summer school was more than I ever could have imagined. It created a bond between facilitator and student that I have rarely experienced. I think it may be due to the course we embarked on together being less performative and more about engaging with each other’s practice, creating a safe space in which to grow as a group, with a shared investment in creating and working with young people.”*

When I asked them to cast their mind back to the first time they experienced summer school as a student, Sarah had this to say: *“Summer school as a student was a very exciting and rewarding time. I remember turning up at Loughborough University as a very young person, a little nervous, very excited and full of eagerness. I remember been thrown into the score of ‘Barnum’ from day one, under the watchful eye of John Morris. The group of students had varying degrees of experience. Some of us had done a fair bit of musical directing and music training, but for others it was their first time holding a stick and reading a score. A delightful mix of personalities and knowledge, we all bonded and supported each other from the very start, conducting classes, score reading, working with singers, an accompanist and a band and then a final presentation for the rest of the school at the end of the week. Evenings, when not working, were spent in the bar getting to know other students on different courses. Meals were in a big dining hall and served*

canteen style. We each had an en-suite room which, although basic, suited all of our needs. We were all there to soak every bit of knowledge we could in that week and totally immerse ourselves in all things NODA Theatre Summer School and that's exactly what we did."

Tommo remembers his first NODA Theatre Summer School as: "Being the start of something really special. I was just about to leave for Liverpool to start my training in the theatre world. I haven't looked back since. I have toured all of the UK and Ireland, Asia and some parts of Europe. NODA Theatre Summer School gave me a taste of what it could be like to turn my love and passion into a career. It gave me a snapshot into a world of creativity, warmth and excitement. I was only 18 at the time so I was pretty wide eyed, but it really got me excited and I haven't looked back since."

I was curious to know how that early experience of NTSS shaped these two inspirational tutors professionally, Sarah said: "I think for me the experience at summer school solidified my interest and determination to go into musical directing in theatre as a professional. I was incredibly lucky to meet John Morris, as shortly after summer school he asked me to join the team of SingliveUK as a vocal tutor and NODA Theatre Summer School gave me that connection. Although I didn't stay with Singlive for long, the experience, the wonderful friendships I made and the belief John and the team had in me, helped me along my path. Summer school is a network of creative professionals and students from all walks of theatre, from every area of the country and beyond. The knowledge, friendships, creativity and energy is really quite something. To be a part of that is truly rewarding and uplifting."

Chris agrees with Sarah's positive reflections: "I'd say NODA Theatre Summer School gave validity to my thoughts. It gave me a realistic look of the profession. It shaped my dreams into a reality of hard work and understanding of body, voice and technique. It confirmed to me one hundred percent this was the career I wanted to pursue. My road has been a really interesting one thus far and I'd say where I have started to where I am now is very different. I never thought I would be working in a

directing capacity in Porto or as an assistant at the Globe when I starting out singing Gilbert & Sullivan numbers in the upstairs of a Methodist Chapel in Haworth and in Keighley Town Hall as one of the chorus in Oliver!"

Finally, when I asked them what they thought made NODA Theatre Summer School valuable Sarah replied: "I think the most important thing for me as a tutor at NTSS is to create a safe, nurturing and positive environment in the teaching room and give the students freedom to be completely and utterly themselves. With this type of environment, people thrive, often obtaining the courage to really come out of their comfort zones and push themselves beyond where they expected to be able to go. It is full of possibilities to learn, make friends and nurture talent. As a student it's an important training ground, an opportunity to try things out, watch each other's journeys

and take important skills away with you. It's about embracing the unknown, refining existing skills and feeling like you can push yourself. NTSS is a safe, happy and creative playground that enables talent to grow, be appreciated and realised. It's one of the highlights of my year."

Tommo was of a similar opinion in terms of what makes NTSS such a special place: "The people, the community and the incredible tutors who come in and share their skill set and knowledge. Learning from others in your group, whether it's for a fun intense week or whether it's a springboard into the industry, summer school provides a safe and joyful environment welcoming to all to be involved, to learn, to have a laugh and hopefully take something away that has bettered you as artists."

I hope you agree that hearing from these two inspirational

tutors gives a clear picture of NODA Theatre Summer School from both sides of the learning equation. Their positivity and appreciation of it's huge value is echoed by so many of our regular students. If you haven't tried it yet, perhaps their insight might encourage you to come in 2024.

Sarah Osbourne, NODA Theatre Summer School Director, speaking to tutors Chris Tomlinson and Sarah de Tute



noda

Theatre Summer School

2024 Courses

Booking now open!

Booking is open to 18+ only

Rave From the Grave

Drawing inspiration from hit musicals *Young Frankenstein*, *The Addams Family*, *Hadestown* and *Beetlejuice*, students will embark on an immersive journey, honing their acting, singing and dancing skills under the guidance of a dynamic West End director/choreographer and MD. The course also features a day of special effects makeup, enriching students' understanding of how to amplify production values for these spook-tacular spectacles.

MT Party People

The perfect opportunity for energetic performers who want to spend a week learning more about the practical skills of performance; integrating disciplines of singing, dance and movement using a smorgasbord of high energy, celebratory musical theatre songs from earlier classics to present day gems.

This practical course will stretch and develop students' understanding of rehearsal and performance technique as well as how to navigate the delights and challenges of these joint disciplines. This course promises to be a high energy, fun fuelled week of musical theatre song and dance.

Directing Musical Theatre

Working with a cast and company to bring characters, story and the world of musical theatre to life on stage is demanding and rewarding in equal measure. This course will provide you with a wealth of practical insights and tools to create memorable performances. For those who are looking to take steps towards directing musicals, the environment of summer school is the ideal backdrop to do this, bringing together a wealth of experience from fellow students and teaching staff alike.

First Steps: Dance from the Start

If dance is something you have always wanted to try, but not felt brave enough to have a go, this empowering course, to build confidence and free the dancer within, is for you this year.

First Notes: Singing from the Beginning

For students who are looking to grow and develop their experience as a singer this is an empowering course to build confidence and unlock the singer within.

Focusing on fundamental vocal technique, this course will help you build a singing toolbox which will allow you to explore songs with musicality and expression.

Acting through Song

This course will empower students to explore and develop a practical knowledge of the skills, techniques and approaches to acting through song. There will be the opportunity to work with a rich and wide range of musical theatre material in both solo and ensemble work throughout the course.

Creating Accessible Theatre for All

A practical and enjoyable course, full of lively conversation with practical exploration. An opportunity to discover how to create a safe space for anyone to come and create successful and inclusive productions of any scale or shape.

Physical Theatre

Physical theatre is one of the most eloquent genres of contemporary theatre and explores narrative, relationships and emotion in a way that often words fail to achieve. This practical course will allow you to dive into this exciting and revealing performance style and discover how to make theatre through physical expression.

Shakespeare's Contemporaries: Body, Mind and Soul

A course for actors and directors who want to dive into the extraordinarily rich theatrical universe that surrounded Shakespeare in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. A time when ideas about the human body, mind, and soul were shifting dramatically - those shifts infused the dramatic action as captured in plays.

Acting in Contemporary Theatre

This practical acting course will explore a breadth of plays in a vast range of styles and sensibilities. Inspired by a range of contemporary play texts from some of the best playwrights of the 21st Century.

How to Create Something from Nothing

Want to learn how to make imaginative, quirky, dynamic, meaningful and impactful performance from scratch? This is the course for you.

Costume for Theatre

A practical and valuable course that focuses on imaginatively recycling and reimagining your group's existing wardrobe to make original costumes for your productions. A great recipe to cut costs and protect the environment without compromising on the look of your production.

In an exciting collaboration each costume student will partner with a set design student and work together in partnership to develop your production vision.

Setting the Scene

A practical and fun course for everyone who would like to develop their knowledge and skills in creative set design for performance whether that be for theatre, site specific, plays, musicals, operas or immersive performance. During the course you will work with performance texts to develop your creative and practical skills.

In an exciting collaboration each set design student will partner with a costume design student and work together in partnership to develop your production vision.

Adapting a Classic Novel for the Stage

A wonderful way of immersing a company or group in creativity and saving money on performance rights is to adapt a classic novel into a play. This approach creates work that will engage and delight an audience.

Things You Need To Know

When

Saturday 3rd August to
Saturday 10th August 2024

Where

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Stone, Staffordshire

How Much Will It Cost?

£720 (inc £120 deposit)
This includes all tuition,
accommodation and food.

noda.org.uk/summerschool

Back to (Summer) School!

NODA South West



NODA Southwest's Katie Jones reports on her first Summer School experience and a Youth Directing Course!

For years, (and long before I became a NODA rep), I've heard people talking about NODA Summer School. I'm told it's a unique week of professional training from the best in the business. A fully residential experience in a purpose-built training centre.

Sooooo, not only are you doing something you love with people who are REALLY great at it, you also get to socialise, eat, drink and meet like-minded people while **SOMEBODY ELSE** does all the cooking, (and, oh my god, there's even an onsite Costa) awesome!

Having worked with youth groups for years, I was drawn to the 'Directing Youth Theatre' course and so I signed up. A friend in my own theatre company is planning to make her

directorial debut with our pantomime this year, so we signed her up for the panto course.

Arriving at the venue there was an instant buzz of excitement and an amazing welcome from the summer school team. Following a mini tour of the campus and our rooms, what seemed like hundreds of people congregated in the main building for a general welcome by the fabulously talented and warm Sarah Osborne, NODA Summer School Director. Then we separated and set off to meet our team and the trainer we'd be working with for the next week.

As the first day got going, we headed into our hub. The team that joined my course was a fascinating collection of like-minded people, each passionate about youth theatre and the importance of what it brings to the lives and confidence of young people. Every member of the group had some insight to bring and together

either filled gaps in our toolboxes or simply inspired confidence in our own instincts.

Our tutor, Chris Tomlinson (Tomo) had an incredible wealth of experience to share and a knack of confidence building. Tomo provided a safe space not just for learning but for testing out ideas, opinions, trying out new techniques and practising new skills. His wicked sense of humour had us all in stitches. At the end of this incredibly useful week, he also found time to give one-to-one tutorials.

Such was the bond of the group we set up our own Facebook page and still share resources and best practice, not just amongst ourselves, but with Tomo, who has remained in touch with us and is incredibly generous with his advice.

I left the course and ran a (already scheduled) community youth project the following week in my own village. The impetus from the course gave new wings to the flight, and I have since been approached to run more both by my own community along with our city council.

I should also add that my friend is now running our pantomime and making it look very easy – she has more than once thanked our company for sending her on the course, which gave her the confidence to undertake it.

This was also our trainer's first NODA summer school. I asked Tomo how he found the course as our trainer, he admitted to having a few first minute nerves...

"A bit like the first day of rehearsals, I was excited but uncertain of what lay ahead. We met in our room which soon became a little sanctuary for us all. We were a real mixed bag of age and experience

with one common denominator, our love for creating work with young people.

As the sessions went on we delved into all sorts from style and practice to practical sessions aimed to engage and develop young people, giving them a place on our stages to tell stories. But youth theatre is more than that, it's a place to grow, learn, make mistakes, discover who you are and where you may fit in this world of ours.

The group responded valiantly and filled our room full of love and care and a hub of sharing ideas and experience. By the end of the week, we were a pretty tight ensemble. Like a real family, our views can sometimes differ, but through this we create something exciting that fulfils us and makes us better. The nerves I felt at the beginning changed to excitement and hope," said Tomo.

The Directing Youth Theatre attendees definitely had similar views...

"Being on the course has given me a renewed confidence to work with people of all ages with a better understanding of what everyone brings to a production...

Judith Johnson, Centre Stage Community Theatre, Langholme, Dumfries and Galloway.

"I hadn't done any Youth Theatre for around 8 years, so just needed a confidence boost after a previous failed start to the YT. Writing the script that we devised and performed definitely gave me the push to write the Christmas show. And I'm about to embark on a 'Script Writing for Live Performance' MicroMasters with Cambridge Uni!

Di FFitch, Red Spider Youth Theatre Company

"We learnt so much on the DYT course

this year and I have been able to bring it into our rehearsals at Avalon Youth Theatre. It was great to work alongside like-minded people, swapping ideas, playing games and improvising, all led by a fantastic tutor," Gemma Crook, Avalon Youth Theatre.

In conclusion, I would say that summer school is something you should explore if you get the chance. This is NODA doing what it does best - providing inspiration through its knowledge and experience of theatre and making it available to anyone who cares to jump on the opportunity.

I have been part of the NODA group for a few years now, but I don't believe I had realised quite what an amazing and uplifting organisation we are - I feel very proud to be a part of it!

Katie Jones

The Gift of Learning

NODA North

2023 has been a year that will stay with me, as I was privileged to be nominated as the new regional representative for District 9, NODA North. I have been supported into the role by local representatives of NODA, and hearing how different societies function has been both fascinating and educational. I have been a member of the Coquetdale Amateur Dramatic Society for over 20 years and I have played many roles on stage, mainly pantomime. I soon learned how diverse other societies within my district were and I was filled with admiration at the scale of talent within the North. However, this was only the beginning and things were about to get better.

Speaking with my peers I was alert to conversations about Summer School 2023. Despite belonging to a society

who were NODA members, I had heard little about opportunities related to summer school.

So, being of curious character (some would call it being nosy) I started to make my own enquiries and learned that I was eligible to enrol on the 'visitor's day', which I did and so took myself off to Staffordshire to partake in the experience.

I was not disappointed. I stayed onsite and arrived the evening before the day's programme and received an extremely warm welcome. Any feelings of being 'out of place' were quickly put aside and from the moment I arrived, I made many friends who were all passionate about theatre. I was able to participate in the musical director's workshop as well as the silent drama and dance

workshops. I now know how to move across a stage - some achievement if I say so myself. Needless to say, after eight hours of dancing and posture training, I could barely get out of bed the next morning.

I was in awe at the standard of professional tutoring; what an honour and a pleasure to be with such skilled people.

If you get the opportunity, take it! I can assure you, you will not be disappointed. Regardless of how long you have been on stage, seize with both hands the gift of learning.

Sue Wood
NODA North Representative
(District 9)

A personal experience

NODA North West



On July 29th at the Yarnfield Conference Centre in Staffordshire, the NODA Summer School began its 2023 course. Laura Priestley from Orrell Music & Drama Society attended for the first time and here she shares her account of the week.

“Around 200 people attended in total across the 12 different courses that were on offer. 22% of people were attending the summer school for the first time. There were 12 people who were on my Stage Management Course, 5 of which were new.

Aside from stage management, the other courses on offer were Acting Techniques, Dance for musical theatre, Directing youth theatre, Making an action film, Mask, mime and puppetry, Pantomime in performance, Post 9/11 American drama, Singing through Sondheim, So you want to be a musical director? Staging Come from Away and Vocal techniques for actors.

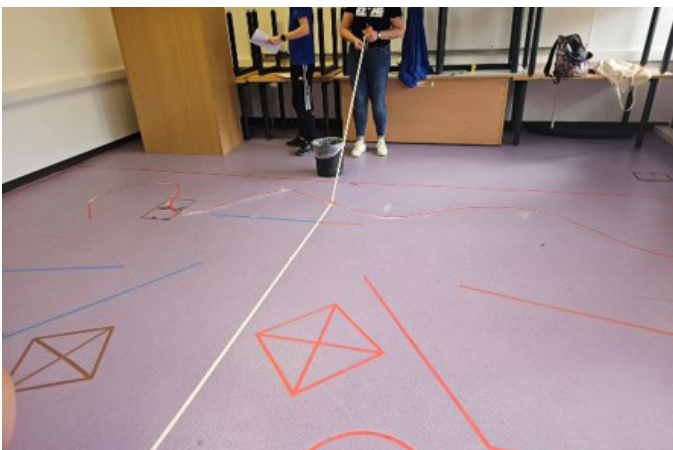
The school began with a brief intro on the Saturday night from Mark Shayle, who has his fair share of experience as



a stage manager. Mark is also a lecturer at Rose Bruford College, London. We were told that we were basically covering the first 2 modules of an undergraduate stage management theatre course and that the sessions would include props, marking out a rehearsal/performance space, writing a prompt script, managing a tech rehearsal and practising cueing a show.

On the Sunday we moved onto the questions of stage management. What is it? Why can't actors self organise? What are the stereotypes? What are the ground rules? We went on to learn the skills of stage management as well as the hierarchy. The list was exhaustive, but covered absolutely everything you would need to know! We also learnt that the prompt doesn't exist in the professional theatre!

The school covered everything you could possibly imagine that is involved in the world of stage management and also things you wouldn't have known a stage manager to do. It was extensive and thoroughly well organised. There are so many opportunities to learn a new skill, to meet like-minded people and to have fun.



The Show Must Go On

NODA West Midlands



One of the many areas impacted by the lockdowns were the Arts and Entertainments industry. Whilst many workers were furloughed, most musicians, actors, dancers, entertainers were left to fend for themselves financially.

We had a theatre booked for the last week in October 2020, started building a cast, gathering musicians, sets, costumes and props designers/makers, for what would have been the world première of a brand new rock musical *GRUeSOMe*. The show was put on ice, as was the world. Costumes stored carefully in our loft, our cast all but melted away to university when they reopened, some had simply left the area.

Fast-forward three years, does anyone remember exactly what happened when? Or do you, like us, seem to be part of the collective, struggling to pin down exact order of events in a two or three year window, a gap in our date lines.

GRUeSOMe was firmly back on track taking to the stage 24th October. We had a cast travelling from as far as Leicester, Sale, Macclesfield and points closer to home, all

bringing a passion, brimming with ideas for their characters back-stories.

It must be remembered *GRUeSOMe* is utterly brand new, a world première. This is not some old tried and tested favourite, or some new contrived movie to stage juke box musical.

I told the cast at an early rehearsal, the parts, and roles they were portraying were akin to their being the very first Frankfurter, Elphaba or Danny Zuko. No-one has ever played these roles before. That was really exciting. The cast were very much a part of the creative process. They inspired me to write additional dialogue to further accommodate their character and expertise.

Our costumes were outstanding, the attention to detail literally staggered me. Choreography again, courtesy of Gareth Ridge, was all brand new, not a reworking of a film dance number... pure creativity.

There was a film made of the show. There was an original cast album recorded, a first for many of the cast. Similarly with the musicians, old and new friends, all brought their A game which added to the visuals with a sonic sound sphere worthy of the West End or Broadway, mainly thanks to Musical Director Tim Sagar.

The ever fascinating subject of *GRUeSOMe*, set in the Autumn of 1888, in the district of Whitechapel in Victoria's London, it is here where the infamous reign of terror perpetrated by the first recognised serial killer 'Leather Apron' took place; you may know him better by a far more foreboding title - Jack the Ripper.

This is not what you may expect. Not a festival of gore, more a nuanced slice of history, more Hitchcock than Wes Craven.

Based on the 2008 album, *Berner Street* by Tony McKenzie and Alan Bruce, *GRUeSOMe* has four new specially written songs, including a bawdy Victorian Music Hall number written especially for the actress playing the celebrated singer Queenie Manns.

The show was written, directed and produced, by Stoke-on-Trent resident Alan Bruce, a regular Sentinel Theatre review contributor since 2011, Regional Representative NODA West Midlands District 3 since 2017.



roda

Be inspired by amateur theatre

This is for the fans... of amateur theatre

October 2023, saw the return of the UK's first musical theatre fan convention Musical Con. Building on last year's success, the event was looking to be bigger and better than last year. The lineup of professionals certainly lived up to the billing with the likes of Lucie Jones, Sophie Evans, Rachel Tucker, Layton Williams and Alisha Weir, who recently played Matilda in Roald Dahl's *Matilda the Musical Movie*. However, the highlight of the weekend was the appearance of Claude-Michel Schönberg, composer of *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon* and *The Pirates of Penzance*.

There were a lot of changes to the layout this year after feedback from attendees. Alongside the main stage, a large exhibitor area, with merchandise, artwork, toys, as well as our Corporate Partners Concord Theatricals and Andrew Lloyd Webber Licensing, NODA once again had a stand to promote the wonderful world of amateur theatre. More on that later!

This year, the workshops were moved to the rear of the main stage behind solid doors. Last year, with two workshop spaces and the main stage all in the same space plus competing volumes, made the whole space a sensory overload. A new addition this year, was the theatre cinema space. A quieter area to sit and watch some amazing theatre films like *Annie* and *The Little Shop of Horrors*.

Workshops this year included: stage make up masterclasses, a *Grease* workshop by the legend Arlene Phillips, *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*, How to Write a Musical with Claude-Michel Schönberg, belting with Alice Fearn and an *And Juliet* inspired workshop with the original Juliet, Miriam Teak Lee.

Throughout the two days, performances on the main stage included the new touring cast of *Everybody's Talking About*

Jamie, honouring Claude-Michel Schönberg with *Bring Him Home*, sung by the current *Phantom of the Opera*, Jon Robyns; *Heathers* cast reunion, which included bringing together Erin Caldwell, Maddi Firth and Verity Thompson.

All in all, there was something for every musical theatre fan, and tickets are already on sale for 2024.

So, what were NODA up to over that weekend? Building on last year's experience, the NODA stand was geared up to promote everything amateur theatre. Back by popular demand were the NODA tote bags, but this year to get a bag, attendees had to complete a survey! By the end of the weekend over 1300 completed surveys were gathered and the data gave us some interesting insights! Some of the results are overleaf.



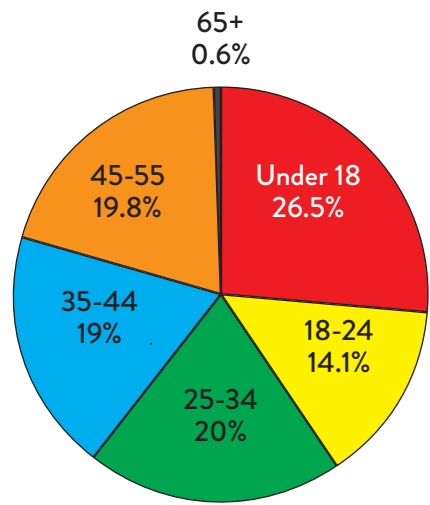
This year saw a real shift in attendees. Last year, we spoke to a lot of people explaining amateur theatre and the benefits of being part of a group. This year, there was far more appreciation for am dram and a huge number of people had watched local shows and even taken part. The biggest take-away was the number of people wanting to get involved and, since the event, we have contacted everyone, explaining how they can search for their nearest NODA member group in their area.

As you will have read earlier in the magazine, NODA's aim for the future is to be the beating heart of amateur theatre. Events like Musical Con, give us that platform to beat the drum of amateur theatre and get as many people involved in the best hobby around as we can.

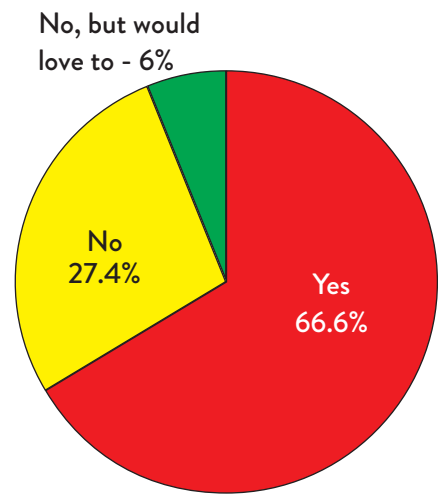
So who is coming in 2024?

Musical Con survey responses

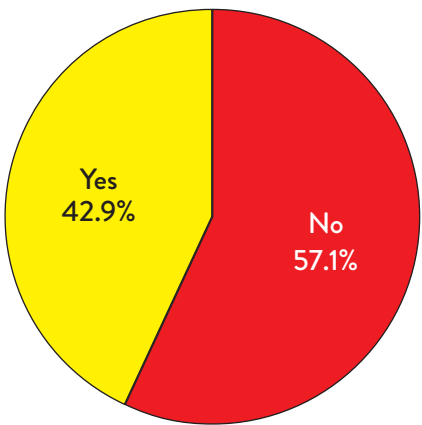
How old are you?



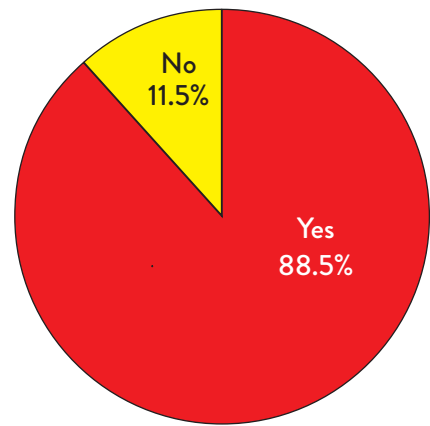
Have you ever performed on stage?



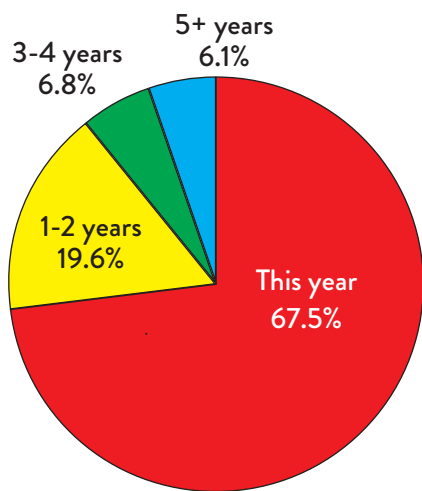
Are you part of an amateur group?



Have you been to watch an amateur theatre production?



When was the last time you watched an amateur show?



What might put you off from watching an amateur show?
Question allowed for multiple responses.

Lack of advertising	43.3%
Show choice	26.8%
Quality	23.2%
Cost	19.8%
Venue	12%



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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 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.

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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.

How Maggie May came to life

NODA Scotland



Our club runs a 3 to 5 year rolling programme where people take slots to produce plays and our annual pantomime. I was down for the May 23 play and started looking for something in September 22. I was aware we had done a lot of comedies recently, so I wanted to stage something with a range of emotions: a play that would make you laugh and cry at the same time, something with a serious theme, and oh my goodness, *Maggie May* by Frances Poet fitted that bill perfectly. But was our club up for the challenge?

Maggie May was first performed at Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch on 13th May 2020. The play was originally commissioned as part of Every Third Minute – a festival of theatre, dementia and hope – which was funded through a Celebrating Age grant from Arts Council England and The Baring Foundation. It was co-produced by Leeds Playhouse, the Queen's Theatre Hornchurch and Leicester's Curve theatre.

They commissioned Frances Poet to write a play that told a positive story of life after diagnosis, for people living with dementia and their supporters. Frances got much of her inspiration from the people attending dementia-friendly activities at Leeds Playhouse.

She committed to engaging with the people taking part, listening sensitively and carefully to find the essence of Maggie (the central character facing this devastating diagnosis) in the real-life stories of people living with dementia and those supporting them. I explained to our committee that if we were to put on a 'dementia friendly' production, then there were some vital (but tricky) components we had to include, if not we were then just putting on a play about dementia, and I didn't want to do that.

Maggie May hadn't been written simply by meeting a group of people and incorporating their stories. This was a highly collaborative process in which people living with dementia, and their supporters, had a significant input at every stage. Attempts had been made

to ensure the piece is fully dementia-friendly, including the integration of singing and elements of repetition to enable all audiences to follow and enjoy the narrative. Maggie's assessments and scene headings are projected to act as a visual prompt through the scene, guiding an audience member who might otherwise struggle to follow its thread. We mounted a large monitor above the stage and then played scene titles accompanied by Maggie's voiceovers.

Early meetings involved discussions about: How colour could be a useful way to identify a character, each of our five characters chose their own key colour when pulling together their wardrobe changes; how music might support engagement, giving joyful breathing space to an audience having



to work hard to hold on to a story. We had a fabulous singer playing Gordon, whose heartfelt, confident, relaxed singing and dancing brought a smile to everyone's faces.

The committee got fully behind my aspirations and then, when I started speaking to my backstage team, I realised we were all committing to this very special play. The cast were picked from current members, and it was one of those moments when you realised you had the mix of people to match the parts perfectly. No weak links in this cast. Maggie was played by Susan Murphy, who gave an outstanding, emotionally sensitive, performance in a role that was barely off stage. Gordon, played by George Docherty, sang his way beautifully through the songs of their youth to reassure Maggie whenever the dementors started entering her mind. Nikki Doig played best friend Jo and was the perfect strong, comedic foil to Maggie and Gordon, lifting the mood and pace whenever she appeared on stage. Mike Burns, playing Maggie's son, and his girlfriend Jo, played by Kim Brymer, together showed with great skill the impact this terrible disease has on everyone in the wider family circle.

Everyone backstage collaborated to solve problems like: Post-it notes falling from the sky, Harry Potter's dementors creeping on from the edges of the stage, a toolbox that lights up Maggie's face on opening, how to create 5 different locations on our small stage quickly and smoothly. Dick Gibson came up with the great idea of the cast moving 3 large square stools around the stage in-between scenes, making different shapes/combinations to suggest hospital beds, sofas, separate seating arrangements in various houses. Each stool had a hidden shelf for props to be collected and stored by the cast as the story unfolded. Janie and Peter White our experienced backstage team labelled the boxes A, B and C and ensured all props were set up in the correct

boxes at the start of each act and the boxes were positioned correctly. Irvine Murison on lights and Brian Gordon on sound painted a visual/sound picture that reflected Maggie's inner turmoil. We are also very lucky to have a professional artist in our membership so Peter Flynn took on the task of painting the set with abstract images reflecting the turmoil in Maggie's neural pathways.

Maggie May is designed to be watched by the broadest possible audience, raising awareness for people that aren't directly affected by dementia, and offering a mirror for those living with dementia and their supporters alike. We wanted to stay true to the original motivations and contacted Lorraine Young of Carnoustie Memories to see if we could work together on sharing the important messages the play contains. Lorraine and her group are committed to making Carnoustie a 'dementia friendly community' so immediately engaged. We agreed the Memories groups – apart from Carnoustie Memories there is a Golf Memories (it's Carnoustie after all!) and Football Memories – would man an information stand in the Dibble Tree Theatre foyer. This was hugely successful with people chatting to them before and after each performance.

We also decided to add in an extra relaxed matinee performance to allow members and their supporters to enjoy an afternoon at the theatre without worrying about disturbing normal theatre etiquette. We sent Lorraine a summary of Frances Poet's play writing process, for her to share with all the families, and invited her along to the Dress Rehearsal to preview the content.

On the day, we left house lights half dimmed in case audience members needed to leave at any point during the performance. One or two did, but were met by Lorraine in the foyer who – safe in the knowledge of the play's content – chatted to them and then



encouraged them to trust her and go back in to experience the uplifting ending. They did come back in and were happy they had made the right choice.

This beautifully written play by Frances Poet was a challenging, emotional journey for everyone on and off stage but worth every single minute. It brought out the best of our club, drawing us all together in a shared aim to do the absolutely best job we could do. It was incredibly well received by audiences, hooked in from the first page to the last as they watched an ordinary family work their way through the highs and lows of their situation. But perhaps most importantly we embraced families in our community who are often isolated by this terrible disease. As a club we are going to work with Carnoustie Memories to include their members in future productions whenever possible.

Frances Poet surprised us by appearing in the Dibble Tree for one of our performances. She was enthralled to see this play being done in Scotland with some Scottish accents, but even happier to see us staying true to the play's concept of working with the dementia community. This play will stay with many in the Carnoustie community for years to come. Thank you, Frances, for providing us with this unique, beautiful script.

Following the trail all the way to the National

NODA East Midlands



It was an honour and a surprise to find out, at the East Midlands regional day, that the *Hansel and Gretel* programme had been nominated for the regional competition. To win the regional competition was a fantastic achievement, as was finishing runner up in the national competition.

As a group, we have always strived to provide our audience with an easy-to-read and informative programme, with details about the show and news

about the group's recent activities. The programme for *Hansel and Gretel* gave us a chance, in one of our first shows back after lockdown, to express our thanks to the audience and reflect on the challenges the group and our members had overcome over the time when we could not meet - many of our cast members also reflected this in their individual character synopsis.

Our programme begins to be put together once the show is cast, with

cast and crew information collated by the director or producer of the show in question - in this case the pantomime's director and group Chairman, Mick Whitehouse - and news articles, photographs, character synopses and introductory letter edited by the group's Vice-Chairman, Chris Peck. Once all the details have been collated and proof-read the final document is sent to the group's production material designer, Will Cox, who assembles all the information into a well laid-out and easy to read programme ready for printing and selling at performances.

After receiving the regional award at the East Midlands regional day in Melton Mowbray, our vice chairman took a trip to the national AGM in Preston, to see how the programme would fare in the national competition. After an enjoyable afternoon meeting members of other societies and listening to the motions and speeches presented at the AGM, Chris was honoured to step up and be presented with the Underwood Quaich by NODA president Christine Hunter Hughes as runners-up in the Barnes programme category.



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Did you know?

NODA was founded in 1899.

Membership of over 2000 amateur groups and 1000 individual members.

Members stage musicals, operas, plays, concerts and pantomimes.

Member venues range from professional theatres to village halls.

Supports the needs of youth and adult theatre, on and off stage.

NODA publishes three magazines a year **NODA Today** Read it for free on our website?

Visit our website to join today

noda.org.uk

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.

How to get people along to an AGM?

NODA South West

Tipton share their top tips on their great AGM attendance!

As any of us know, getting people along to attend a society AGM meeting can often be a challenge. So, on a somewhat miserable evening for the time of year, there was still a very good attendance at the Community Hall in Tipton St John, when the Tipton Players and Pantomime Society held their annual AGM a few months ago.

The chairman was very pleased to report that 22/23 had been a much more “normal” year without the COVID restrictions, that the production and the pantomime had all been all right on the night, that a number of social

events and charity donations had gone well and closed with a tribute to long standing member Alan Marks.

So, what was their secret to the attendance? After the formal part of the evening, a delicious “bring and share” supper was served. Members, together with family and friends, were entertained admirably with some rehearsed play readings, giving the opportunity for those who were no longer keen on learning lines to still display their talents on stage.

The wow factor was certainly there when the front curtains opened to the stunning and colourful costumes, boldly standing out against the black

backdrop, and the amusing readings of extracts from Oscar Wilde’s *An Ideal Husband*.

The gentlemen looked most elegant in their dinner jackets and the ladies superb in their evening gowns with period accessories, and the line “*men are grossly immaterial*” certainly raised a laugh around the audience. A lighter, but equally amusing sketch followed, making for a perfect end to a most enjoyable evening.

Some food for thought perhaps in combining AGMs with something more interesting too!

‘Tricia Barclay

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Useful Contacts

East Zelda Rolfe zelda.rolfe@noda.org.uk

East Midlands Amanda Hall amanda.hall@noda.org.uk

London Annie Hertler-Smith annie.hertlersmith@noda.org.uk

North Michelle Coulson michelle.coulson@noda.org.uk

North East Jo Sykes jo.sykes@noda.org.uk

North West Position Vacant info@noda.org.uk

Scotland Neil Hartley neil.hartley@noda.org.uk

South East Susanne Crosby
Mark Allen susanne.crosby@noda.org.uk
mark.allen@noda.org.uk

South West Jo Wilson-Hunt jo.wilsonhunt@noda.org.uk

Wales & Ireland Matt Hampson matt.hampson@noda.org.uk

West Midlands Carl Cook carl.cook@noda.org.uk

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

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

DBS Checks
NODA Head Office - Dale Freeman
dbs@noda.org.uk - 01733 374 790

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

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

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

South East groups perform at Carfest

NODA South East



Two groups from the South East were asked to perform at Carfest, the festival organized by TV star, Chris Evans. Sandie Thomson from BATS Next Gen, a youth group says: "One of our committee members, Iona Strachan, heard that the organisers were looking for local groups to perform on the Showcase Stage during the weekend, giving them a 30-min slot. We knew we could fill that with some songs from 'Everybody's talking about Jamie' and 'The Addams Family' plus a couple of solo numbers, so Iona arranged for us to be put forward. They gave us the Saturday afternoon slot of 12:50pm. Although information re number and configurations of mics, stage size and even how we could get access (performer and one parent, plus a small creative team all got free day tickets, which would normally cost £94 per adult!), was sketchy and late coming, we all had a fabulous day.

16 of our young people performed eight numbers: we opened with 'Any Dream Will Do' from 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat' followed by a mix of 'Pulled' (The Addams Family), 'Spotlight' (Everybody's talking about Jamie), 'Suddenly Seymour' (Little Shop of Horrors), 'We Will Rock You' and 'Part of Your World' from 'The Little Mermaid.' Katie Conquest performed for the last time with BATS Next Gen, singing 'Let

It Go' from 'Frozen' she has been with us for nine years since she joined us at the age of nine. We also finished off with The 'Spongebob Squarepants' theme song to introduce our next production.

We only had one rehearsal before performing, with Owen White directing and Ryan Stevens arranging the backing tracks. This was held on Thursday 24th July, two days before the event! However, they sang and performed beautifully and attracted quite an audience! Carfest have asked us to come back again in 2024!"

As well as BATS Next Gen, NODA Award Winning Basingstoke Gang Show performed to their largest audience in its 43-year history.

A 19-strong group of the 2023 cast took to CarFest on Saturday, 26 August, performing five times around the arenas, culminating with a main-stage performance ahead of Rick Astley! CarFest organiser Chris Evans was presented with the gang show emblem - the coveted red scarf - which he wore all night after their performance, he said: "Let's hear it for Basingstoke Gang Show you were awesome!"

The Basingstoke Gang Show also delivered performances at The Big Early on Thursday, August 24, with Curtis Pritchard from *Love Island* playing a cameo role as 'the duck' in front of 8,000 people. The Big Early is for campers before the main festival.



Creating Drama in NODA North East Youth



NODA North East has secured external grant funding to run youth workshops around the region. Two workshops have been held so far. The first in District 7 supported 24 children, aged 6 – 12, to work with Sarah Osborne, Drama Practitioner and Director of NODA Summer School, to unlock their creativity, to create characters and to work spontaneously. Using a range of games and activities the participants had a great time, whilst learning new techniques, developing their understanding of performance and also making new friends.

The second workshop was held in District 11, with the focus being “How to act well and have fun doing it”. The session, again led by Sarah, was attended by 29 young people, aged 8 -16, along with their youth leaders, where they had chance to develop new skills and explore their experience and understanding of acting techniques. Activities included: use of voice, identifying what the characters objective was, developing a character as well as a short piece of scripted work. The attendees identified a range of ‘take aways’ from the session including the importance of: energy, focus, confidence, projection and voice.

In order to plan further sessions and to be able to complete evaluation reports for the funders feedback is really important. Here are just some of the comments received:

Martha 6, nearly 7, said: *“I really enjoyed the ‘make me’ game. I used my imagination and made my body into a castle door.”*

Charlotte, aged 7, said: *“I really enjoyed the drama workshop yesterday. My favourite part was ‘make me....’ And I also made some new friends.”*

Seth, aged 10, who already has 5 years of stage experience, explained that he enjoyed working together and playing games and felt the workshop would be helpful to those that do. Seth was also keen to encourage people to attend workshops in the future.

Zack, aged 10, really enjoyed how playful the session was. He felt that Sarah knew her audience and kept everything to the age range of the group rather than making it too difficult or confusing for them.

Olivia, aged 11, *“I enjoyed working in teams to complete tasks and felt that a lot of the activities would help to improve my confidence on stage”.*

Feedback from parents/carers is also important in terms of our planning for the future and one parent commented: *“I thought it was great to bring children together from different societies because it really expanded their interactions and opportunities for tips and advice from other people. Our kids are really lucky to be able to join in with something like this and they really loved it. Thank you NODA for giving them this opportunity.”*

Now to start planning more workshops for 2024!

Jo Sykes
Youth Co-ordinator, NODA North East



Zenith Goes To Edinburgh!

noda youth South West



Youth Theatre performs 4 shows at the Fringe to celebrate its 60th Anniversary!

Zenith Youth Theatre Company, based in Bath, last ventured to the Edinburgh Fringe in 2018, and so, for their 60th anniversary, it was decided to go again. Taking nearly 40 young people to perform and experience the Edinburgh Fringe is both terrifying and joyful in equal measure, but as a charity committed to 'advancing the young people in the dramatic/musical arts and theatre studies' then what better way than immersing them in theatre for a week?

Two fairly small theatre spaces (of just 5 x 2 metres) needed the cast divided into four, with each group performing one of the two plays and two musicals chosen. The shows picked suited each cast and audiences with *The Twits* and *Dreams of Ann Frank* as the plays and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and *The Theory of Relativity* as the musicals.

After two years of raising funds, planning accommodation, transport, venues, shows, T shirts, hoodies, food etc, a 10 hour journey on a coach from Bath, early one Sunday morning, arrived in Edinburgh for a

week of performing each morning and attending as many shows as they could fit in to the afternoons and evenings.

Anyone who has done a show at the Edinburgh Fringe will know that you do not get much time to prepare for performances. The theatre spaces are literally used back-to-back with only around 10 or 15 minutes to enter the theatre, set your props, let the audience in and begin. It was all very exciting and the young people took the challenge in their stride.

The group had pre booked one or two shows every day for the cast to watch and saw a huge range of productions, from circus acts and comedians to serious plays and improvised musicals. Alice reflected: *"Edinburgh Fringe was such an amazing experience because it showed us a variety of shows we wouldn't have been able to see back in Bath."* Ebony agreed: *"The Edinburgh Fringe festival gave us an amazing opportunity to see a whole range of shows, consisting of many different genres."*

The young people were also given free time and many took the opportunity to watch even more shows. *"I think the shows were so good because they were all very energetic"* (Johnny).

All in all, it was an exhausting but very successful week. Joe agreed: *"Edinburgh was a once in a lifetime experience that I will never forget,"* and Fin said: *"The Festival was a great experience for the company as we performed our show in a different setting and for a variety of audiences. We saw some incredible unique shows that we would never be able to see again."*

Sam said: *"The festival was a once in a lifetime experience to perform at. So much so, I want to try everything I can to go back next year."* Flo agreed: *"Edinburgh was an incredible experience where I learned so much about performing in front of so many different people. It is something I will never forget."* Beth S said: *"I enjoyed the opportunity to perform on a world stage."*

All four shows had great reviews and we were lucky enough to receive a huge total of 16 nominations and even won an award! And if you are thinking of taking your own group to the festival, let me leave the final word to Beth F: *"The Edinburgh Fringe Festival opened my eyes and sparked within me a desire to immerse myself in performance art. It was an opportunity that left each and every one of us with a newfound deep passion for theatre."*

Encouraging youth in the London region



NODA London Region, District 5 boasts two societies which do their best to encourage talent to perform and flourish, says Regional Representative, Phil Wilcox. Here are their stories:

Junior WODS (Woodmansterne Operatic and Dramatic Society)

Junior WODS was formed in 1986, to encourage the younger generation that lived locally to tread the boards.

During this period of time the backbone of the Junior Section has been Margaret Chorlton MBE. Margaret received the award for her contribution to the local community. Margaret not only wrote the pantomimes for the juniors, she was also directing and managing the set build and design with her husband Dave Chorlton.

Following the shutdown of the junior section during Covid, we were forced into starting up again with new blood; we are back up to full strength again thanks to Deanne Weller and Erin Brindle, with the next pantomime well into rehearsal stage and set design.

Over the years, many of our talented juniors have progressed into professional status, with many others attending Brit School.

Whilst many of the juniors go and attend university and move on in their lives, we have had many stay with us and strengthen our team.

Jo and Holly Bartram continued into senior Wods for many years and also supported Margaret Chorlton with the juniors, as did Lisa Woodley.

Erin Brindle, nee Ridgwell, has been with us since 2003, in juniors, seniors and is now running the Junior Wods with Deanne Weller. Also, Eleanor Wilson has just finished university and contacted us to see if she could help in any way and gain experience in all backstage elements.

A thriving junior section ensures our senior section continues to improve and flourish.

Jamie Wetherall
Chairman Woodmansterne Operatic and Dramatic Society



Here are just a few of our success stories over the years:

- Melissa Vagg - Senior Assistant Producer for ITV
- Taryn Trevatt - Hair and make up for Disney Paris and Madame Tussauds
- Tom Shipman - Sound Engineer for Fairfield Halls Croydon
- Steven Hulbert - Cameraman BBC
- Adam Pettigrew - Actor: West End leads in *Wicked* and *Avenue Q*
- Aaron Wetheridge - Actor (as a junior) in *Les Miserables* in the West End
- Eleanor Edmonds - Actress and Opera Singer Lead in *Carmen*
- Keeley Ridgwell - Make-up artist (*Killing Eve* and Netflix)



Edge Hill Youth

We are fortunate to be blessed with a terrific pool of young performers.

Orlando joined our first panto since we reformed in 2016, (*The Mishmash Panto*) as a five year old fairy and has been in every panto since and the musical *Oliver*. This year, she graduates to leading seven Teen Fairies in *The Sleeping Beauty*. Her brother Pdraig regularly plays one end of the cow with his great friend Sam. Orla says performing gets her out of the house and it's fun! She can sing, dance and

act so is a highly valued member of the company.

Christian has played an obnoxious goblin child in *Cinderella*, Simple Simon in *Jack and the Beanstalk*, Kurt in *Sound of Music*, Noah Claypole in *Oliver* and is currently rehearsing two roles in *The Sleeping Beauty*: American Tommy Trickortreat and extremely posh Sir Rupert, both accents he absolutely nails! After a recent rehearsal he said to his directors: "I think this slapstick scene is going to be really popular - it's great fun!"

In contrast, Jake Kenny-Byrne, who was Prince Charming in the *MishMash*, went on to train at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and is due to star in the ITVX comedy series *G'wed* next year.

Given that, we say we turn no one away when we audition for the panto, we can accommodate children with disabilities and have had children with severe mobility problems and autistic children who have enjoyed performing and have enhanced the experience for everyone else.

This year we have 27 Primary school kids and 38 secondary school kids under 16, 18 of them being dancers! *Oliver* was so popular that all the dancers signed up again and brought their friends!

The future for our youngsters is looking good.

Wendy Tansey (Edge Hill Players, Wimbledon)

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What a Wonder (Theatre Training Academy)



We are Wonder Theatre Training Academy or Wonder TTA for short, and we are a training academy for budding performers in North London. We operate an audition only entry criteria and are exceptionally proud of the young people we have working with us. We train every Saturday in all three disciplines and currently have two jam-packed companies for children aged 9 – 14.

Our academy is a place where the young performers come to grow and learn, and we really are like one big family! Wonder TTA is where our young performers are celebrated, nurtured and encouraged to push themselves every single day.

2023, has been a very busy year; first with a sell-out production of *Matilda Jr* in April, and then, a performance at Disneyland Paris in October. For lots of our children, *Matilda Jr* was their first, full theatre production and, as with all live theatre, we made memories and friendships that will last a lifetime. We travelled to Disneyland Paris in October, to take part in their young performers programme. We had a workshop with the artistic director of their performing arts programme and then had the chance to perform on the Videopolis stage. This really was an experience of a lifetime! Going backstage at Disneyland, performing on the stage and working with the Disney professionals was an absolute dream come true!

We are now back home and our feet have only just touched the ground.

We have begun training again and welcomed many new performers into the academy. We are so excited to see what is next for Wonder TTA!

Joanne McGahon



NODA North East Youth ensure their summer holidays are action packed



Whilst the sun wasn't in abundance this summer, fun and games (and a little bit of hard work) were definitely part of the picture in NODA North East. A whole range of activities took place including regular rehearsals and preparation for shows.

In District 5, Dinnington Operatic Society hosted a workshop with professional performer Matt Roddis. The focus of the workshop was developing characters, particularly those which feature in *The Wizard of Oz* as this is the show the DOS Students' Academy will perform in February 2024.

The youth leaders from Crigglestone Community Theatre Company, District 7, handed over six weeks of workshop responsibility to two of their senior members, Ana Taylor and Abi Welburn, who provided weekly workshops for the *Kids from Crigg*, during the school summer holidays, which combined singing and dancing and the chance to learn new skills. Abi and Ana are both studying at CAPA and are also members of *Kids from Crigg*. The workshops allowed the rest of the group to benefit from Ana and Abi's experience and the *Kids' Team*, who also attended the sessions to provide safeguarding support, felt that they had been great fun for the members and were delighted that some experienced 'Kids' could take the lead. Using popular musicals, Ana and Abi were able to engage with the group and also encouraged participants to put forward their own ideas so that the sessions could be tailored to the interests of those attending.

Abi said: "We were both so grateful for the opportunity to run the workshops and be given free reign with the teaching."

NODA Today - Winter 2023

Crigglestone CTC definitely seem to be ahead with their succession planning.

Meanwhile, in District 13, Yew Tree Youth Theatre (YTYT) supported Wakefield LitFest to bring 8 new plays into being. They commissioned eight writers, aged 14 – 25 years old, to write short plays inspired by the cultural and artistic landscape of the Wakefield District. The plays were then passed onto directors, also aged 14-25, who prepared them to be shared in a festival of new work at the Wakefield Mechanics Theatre in September. The plays were as diverse

as their creators and the group were excited to showcase them. There is potential for the plays to be published and a film maker captured the festival. YTYT are very proud to be championing a project that is giving the next generation of creatives a platform to develop and showcase their work. Wakefield LitFest is a literature festival programmed by young people, for young people, funded by Creative Minds and Wakefield District Housing.

Jo Sykes
Youth Co-ordinator
NODA North East



Tipton's Youth take-over!

 South West



TIPPS Juniors on Horseback. Credit: 'Tricia Barclay

TIPPS Juniors do it all at panto time!

Audiences at Tipton St John Community Hall were treated to a delightful production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* recently, all totally performed, directed and choreographed by the junior section of Tipton Players and Pantomime Society, in addition to organising front of house duties, costumes, and props.

Written by Natalie Anning and Claire Devin, the driving force behind the group, having once been juniors themselves, the story unfolded in typical pantomime tradition, but the youngsters certainly put their very own stamp on the production.

Clever choices had obviously been made when allocating parts as they were tailored to the varied strengths and sizes

of the cast! There were some lovely individual performances, but this production was very much a team effort all round with everyone playing their parts sincerely, in some cases more than one!

There were some memorable moments too – particularly a delightful pantomime horse, and a fun race with a bevy of little jockeys on inflatable mounts, all in slow motion to the theme from *Chariots of Fire*.

Ending with a lively finale number, and the usual Tipton refrain, this production certainly highlighted a wealth of talent for the future and was very warmly received! Oh yes it was!

'Tricia Barclay

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CRE8IV Theatre Co. at Edinburgh Fringe

noda youth North West



This summer, CRE8IV THEATRE CO. embarked on a thrilling journey to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and what an adventure it was! We were privileged to showcase our extraordinary talent through two spectacular shows, leaving audiences in awe and coming back for more. We had a wonderful 10 days together, not only performing but watching lots of other shows and exploring the beautiful city of Edinburgh!

Beyond Broadway: A Musical Extravaganza!

In our first dazzling performance, *Beyond Broadway*, our diverse cast, spanning ages 9 to 50, took the stage in a mesmerising musical journey. They brought to life the enchanting tunes of *Jekyll & Hyde*, the whimsy of *Matilda*, the passion of *Les Misérables*, and the magic of *Wicked*. The harmonies were impeccable, and the energy was palpable, leaving the audience spellbound.

Sing-a-Long to Smash Hit Musicals: Where You Become the Star!

In our innovative concept show, *Sing-a-Long to Smash Hit Musicals*, five of our incredibly talented cast members serenaded the crowd with iconic songs from *We Will Rock You*, *Dirty Dancing*, *Rock of Ages* and many more. What set this performance apart was the incredible audience participation. The room buzzed with excitement as everyone joined in, creating an electric atmosphere that reverberated with joy.

NODA Today - Winter 2023

Rave reviews and enthusiastic fans!

The response from our audiences was overwhelming! We received rave reviews, and some dedicated fans even returned to experience our shows multiple times. Your energy and enthusiasm fueled our performances, making our time at the Fringe truly unforgettable.

Exciting developments on the horizon!

But that's not all! During our run at the Fringe, we had the incredible opportunity to connect with a talented writer and composer of a brand new musical. Following multiple meetings, we're thrilled to announce that we'll be collaborating to bring his vision to life under the expert direction of Chris Higgins and the unmatched talent of our cast.

What's next? Even more magic!

We're already gearing up for next year, with plans to take both shows back to the Fringe, promising an even bigger and better experience. Plus, get ready for a brand new show that will take you on another unforgettable musical journey!

Andy McNicholas, Councillor for the North West added: "It's fantastic to see Chris and the team at Cre8iv Theatre Co, representing the amateur theatre from the Northwest at Edinburgh Fringe and I look forward to seeing how they build on their success."

noda

Long Service Awards

Visit noda.org.uk/awards to apply today



5 Year Badge



10 Year Badge



15 Year Badge



20 Year Badge



25 Year Badge



30 Year Badge



35 Year Badge



40 Year Badge



45 Year Badge



50 Year Badge



25 Year Medal



Silver Bar



50 Year Medal



Gold Bar



Diamond Bar



55 Year Pin



60 Year Badge / Pin



65 Year Pin



70 Year Pin



Individual Member



Society Life Member



Youth Award



Commendation
Award



NODA Achievement
Award

Long Service Awards

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

What can I apply for?

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

Who can apply?

The awards are intended for those who, week after week, attend rehearsals or spend many hours backstage, or on administrative work, and whose services are essential/indispensable to putting on shows. 'Occasional' service, e.g. just for a show week itself, does not qualify and generalised descriptions of duties such as backstage, F.O.H, programmes, tickets, committee, officer or helper are insufficient. The grant of life membership of a society is NOT a qualification for a NODA Award, nor is any status which can be achieved by merely paying a subscription - such as 'Patron', 'Associate' or 'Hon. Member'. Receipt of any remuneration - but not refund of actual accountable expenses - disqualifies, and for this purpose, remuneration includes gifts above a nominal value. Payment for services to the amateur theatre other than to the sponsoring societies, however, does not preclude the person from being given an award.

We appreciate that some societies cannot afford, or are not allowed, due to their constitution, to purchase awards for members. Whilst the applications will need to be made by the society, the individual is able to pay for the award themselves (or indeed someone else in the society).

How do I apply?

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

What if I don't qualify?

Those who do not qualify for one of the long service awards may be entitled to wear the **NODA COMMENDATION AWARD**, especially if they are in receipt of remuneration or do not serve amateur theatre on a weekly basis. Please note - 10 years minimum service to amateur theatre is required before a nominee can be considered for this award.

Youth Awards

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

New badges recently added



5 Year Badge

Start your Long Service Award journey earlier than ever before.



NODA Achievement Award

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

Travels with the chain

Follow the travels of NODA National President, Christine Hunter Hughes, as she tours the UK visiting **your** shows!
Follow her on Facebook - facebook.com/NODAPresident



Tyldesley Little Theatre - 'No Sex Please, We're British!'



Workington AOS - 'Phantom of the Opera'



Angles Theatre - 'Six: Teen Edition'



Penwortham, Preston - 'Thank You For The Music'



Gateshead Musical Theatre Company (Juniors) - 'Spongebob The Musical'



CODYS Aldershot - 'Rent'



Whitehaven and District AOS - 'Into The Woods'



Watlington Players - 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang'



Flyde Coast Players - 'The Haunted Through Lounge and Recessed Dining Nook at Farndale Castle'

Thank you so much to all the societies who have invited me to see their productions so far! At the time of writing, I have already visited some 24 productions, the Scottish Conference at Peebles and have travelled over 5000 miles. I took the decision from the start to drive wherever possible, rather than relying on public transport, which, as we all know, is currently not too reliable, and I had a vision of me being stuck in Cornwall when I should have been in Scotland (or vice versa) and with no way to get there – hence the car. At least that way I am mainly in charge of my own destiny! Thus far it's working (well touch wood) although a closure on the M6 recently resulted in 2.5 hours being added to the journey and a journey from Kings Lynn to Peebles was hardly my most sensible decision. However, the show I saw made it all worthwhile, and the Scottish Conference was, as always, inspiring so I would not have wanted to miss either of them.

I am honoured to serve as your president (again) and am absolutely determined that this time I will do it properly and not have a national pandemic to contend with (RACC concrete excepted). Having the dubious honour of being the only National President in peacetime to serve two consecutive years, and still only managed something like 4 months, just reminds me just how difficult the last 3 or 4 years have been for societies everywhere, and I am in awe of the wonderful productions I have seen so far, and the sheer dedication and hard work that goes into each and every production that hits the stage.

This seems like the ideal opportunity to remind societies that every NODA Society can invite the president to visit. It does not need to be a special occasion, although I have already visited a 25th, a 75th, a 100th and a 110th year Anniversary celebration or concert, as well as lots of invites to see an 'annual production or concert' which, of course, are just as welcome, so do please invite me. I promise I will come if I can but do 'get in early' as I have already had to remind myself that I can only be in 1 place at a time, and also that there is only one of me – for which I suggest everyone is probably most grateful. As part of my determination, I have re-instated the NODA President Facebook page, and so at each visit I am asking to have a photo taken with the cast, which then appears on the Facebook page. Do have a look so you can share my journey with me.

I am not going to single out any one particular visit because it would be unfair to do so, as all the productions I have seen have demonstrated so clearly all the hard work, dedication, fun and enjoyment (not to mention the friendship and camaraderie) for the members of the society, and the pleasure you bring to your audiences.

Carry on the great work and do please consider inviting me to your productions.



Unveiling Sheffield's Hidden Gem - The Lantern: A Beacon of Art and History

Explore the vibrant world of The Dilys Guite Players at The Lantern

Nestled in the heart of Sheffield's cultural tapestry lies The Lantern, a historical gem with a story to tell. The Dilys Guite Players (DGP), the driving force behind this respected institution, has transformed it into a vibrant hub for community theatre that welcomes all. If you're a theatre lover yet to experience the enchantment of The Lantern, we urge you to make it a top priority. This article promises to be your backstage pass to a world of arts, entertainment and historical significance that beckons you to embark on a captivating journey.

A Theatre with a purpose

The Lantern, Sheffield's oldest surviving theatre, is more than just another venue. It's a living testament to the power of passion and community spirit. The DGP, an independent charity, has made it their home; a place where everyone is welcome to partake in the performing arts. Whether you're an aspiring actor, a visionary director, a tech-savvy enthusiast or a keen audience member, The Lantern offers a warm welcome to all.

The heart of the DGP: our stellar volunteers

Behind the scenes, a dedicated team of volunteers makes the magic happen. From our enthusiastic charity board members to the tireless theatre crews, The Lantern's light shines bright, captivating the hearts of locals and visitors alike. We are proud to have the unwavering support of individuals from across the UK. Our local NODA representative, Sue Cox, adds an extra layer of warmth and

support to what we do.

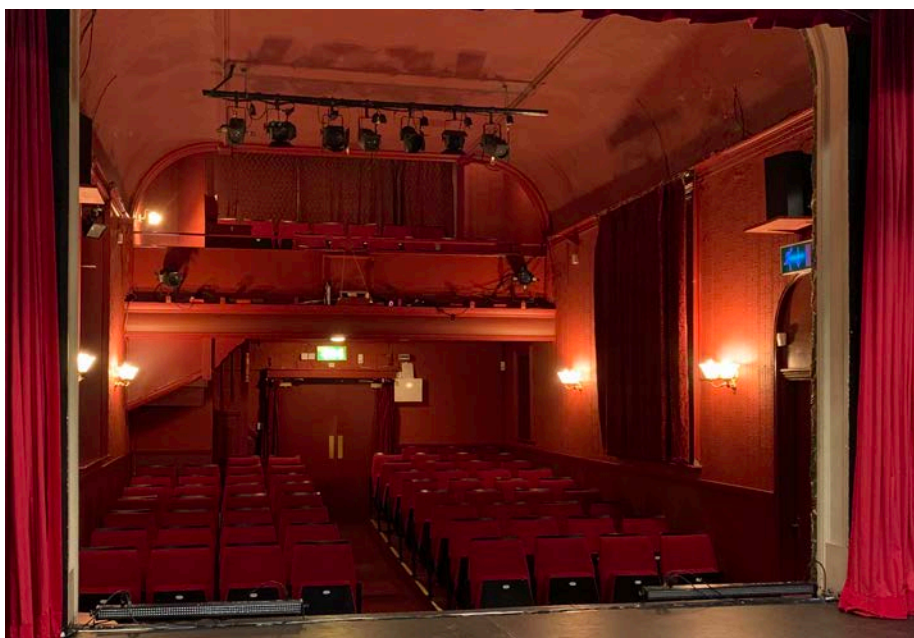
Our dedicated front-of-house team makes sure our audiences feel right at home. With their unwavering commitment, we offer not only a fully stocked bar, but also a mouthwatering selection of locally sourced ice cream, all designed to elevate your experience and make your visit truly delightful.

Completing our dynamic ensemble, we've got fantastic teams at work. These include our creative team, the skilled technical team, and the talented photography group. Together, they collaborate to capture the essence of our rehearsals and productions in stunning images.

Past, present, and future productions

The DGP, rooted in tradition since 1947, when they first performed at the Library Theatre in Sheffield, has continued to evolve while staying true to its commitment to quality and inclusivity. What truly sets The DGP apart is its unparalleled production rate, with up to ten captivating shows every season, making it one of Sheffield's most prolific community theatre groups.

The creative team, a cornerstone of The DGP, guides every production from script to stage, ensuring a diverse range of genres and offering at least one rights-free play per year. Our upcoming *Hamlet*, in September 2024, is already creating a buzz. In the meantime, our talented cast and crew are diligently rehearsing for Marc Camoletti's *Boeing Boeing*, December 2023, a brand new play *The Sculpture*, February 2024, and Agatha Christie's *The Unexpected Guest*, March 2024.



Brace yourselves for *The Turn of the Screw*, an intriguing adaptation by Ken Whitmore, bringing Henry James' novella to life in a mesmerizing performance set for November 2024. And, as a delightful holiday treat, we'll be closing the year with *Stepping Out* by the talented Richard Harris in December 2024.

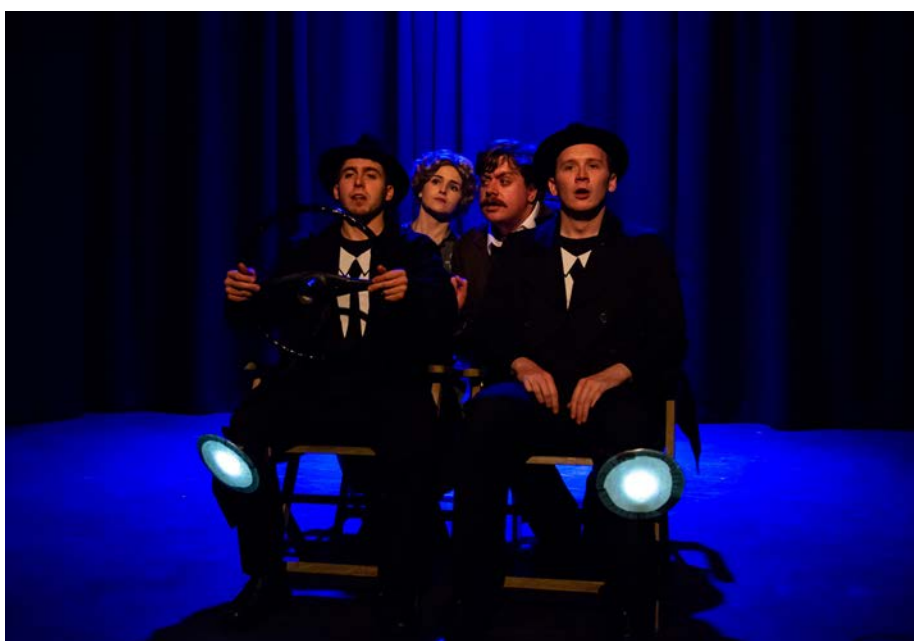
Unleashing new talent

The DGP takes pride in nurturing budding talent through its New Writing Festival (NWF), now in its twelfth year. Aspiring playwrights are invited to submit original shorts for stage performance. This festival frequently acts as a stepping stone for new actors,

directors, and crew to gain experience and set the stage for their involvement in full-length plays at the theatre.

The future beckons

The DGP doesn't rest on its laurels. 'Write On,' the latest addition to the NWF, will spotlight one-act plays, further enriching the artistic landscape. In addition, the creative team has recently paved the way for exciting future filmed projects, building on the experience gained during the lockdown and developing new skills such as film production, cinematography and editing. To get a taste of our innovation, explore the 'Lantern Online' projects on our website.



Rediscovering history

No journey through The Lantern is complete without a glance at its fascinating past. It was built in 1893, as a private theatre for a cutlery magnate's family; this architectural marvel withstood the ravages of time, including World War II bombings. Today, it stands as an intimate, atmospheric, and historically significant venue that transports audiences to a bygone era while presenting innovative and compelling productions.

Dilys Guite, an actress and drama teacher, stumbled upon the dilapidated 'Chalet Theatre' in the 1950s. With unwavering dedication and £33 in the bank, she and her friends embarked on a remarkable journey, turning it into The Lantern - a beacon of art. The theatre was eventually presented to the Dilys Guite Players by the owner, Charles Richardson, in memory of his late wife, and a charity was born.

A glimpse of the future

Following the theatre's reopening after the Covid-19 lockdown, The Lantern has transformed again, with the entrance foyer and bar area receiving a fresh, welcoming makeover. Plans for the future include refurbishing the dressing rooms to create a multipurpose space and even fitting a new theatre roof.

Join us at The Lantern

We'd love you to visit The Lantern and immerse yourself in its rich history and vibrant present. If you have any questions or want to chat, don't hesitate to reach out. We eagerly await your visit to The Lantern, where history, art and community converge for a theatrical experience like no other.

Alison Glentworth,
Creative Director, Dilys Guite Players

Welcome to the Rock

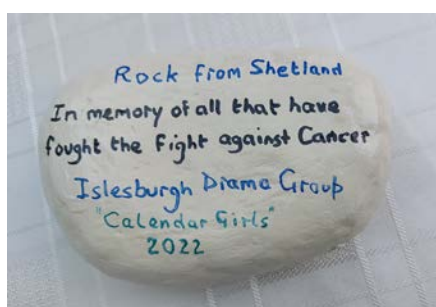
As NODA president 2021/22, I was privileged to visit some excellent productions whilst seeing a lot of the UK I wouldn't normally have visited. Living as I do on the County Durham coastline, it was nice to visit other coastlines – none more so than Budleigh Salterton in Devon. A habit I got into several years ago was to pick a pebble rock from the coast I was visiting and deposit it on the next beach I went to.

In Budleigh Salterton, on the seafront, there is a cairn of rocks left there by people who have suffered loss in their lives – I selected a rock a few metres away with the intention of dropping it at my next coastal destination of Whitehaven. However, I forgot, and the next coastal place I visited was the vast shoreline around the Shetland Isles when I went to see Islesburgh Drama Group perform *Calendar Girls* the play, in Lerwick.

The play and the detail that went into it was mind blowing and I knew then that this society would be the recipient of my president's cup. Obviously at its awarding down in Plymouth, there was no one from the society to attend to collect, so I made a promise that, having fallen in love with the landscape and the inhabitants of the islands, that I would return on holiday to present the certificate to them in person.

But what about the rock from Devon that should have ended up in Whitehaven – well it did briefly, as the secretary of one of the Whitehaven societies, Tracy McQuat, paints and decorates rocks as a hobby. So, the rock from Sidmouth, painted and decorated in Whitehaven, was destined for a society winning the president's cup in Shetland.

In June of this year, as promised, I took



a five-day mini break in Shetland and drove around the islands' many beauty spots and coastal areas. I collected a rock in a contemplative and extremely tranquil walk across the beautiful tombolo that joins mainland Shetland to St. Ninian's Island in the southwest of the main island.

The painted rock from Devon was presented to Islesburgh Drama Group members alongside the certificate at a get together of the society and myself in Lerwick, whilst I promised to have the rock taken from Shetland delivered to Devon. It seemed fitting that the



rock from Shetland ends up on a shrine of rocks in Budleigh Salterton commemorating all that have died with the inscription of "In memory of all that have fought the fight against Cancer" – a fitting tribute to sign off their production of *Calendar Girls*.

The rock was placed on the Devonshire cairn in late September, by outgoing President, Nick Lawrence. Balance between Devon and Shetland is restored.

Gordon Richardson (Past President)

Pied Pipers' chair is "ready-made Dagenham girl" for Spring 2024, production

NODA East



Madeline Harmer was just a young schoolgirl in 1968, when 187 women sewing machinists at the Ford Motor Company plant in Dagenham, Essex, went on strike. Harmer and her family lived on a council estate in nearby Ilford, and her father was one of the 30,000 workers at the Ford plant.

Prompting the strike was the company's re-grading of the women's jobs at a less skilled grade than men, meaning they were being paid only 85% of the rate paid to men. The sewing machinists made covers for the Ford cars' seats at their jobs. Once the strike began, the stock of car seats declined. Eventually, the plant could not complete the cars without their seats, and the men working at Ford found themselves with no work – cutting off their pay while the strike continued.

Today, Harmer is the chair of the Pied Pipers Musical Theatre Company in Cambridge, and the group's Spring 2024 production will be *Made in Dagenham*, the musical theatre retelling of the 1968 strike story from the perspective of the sewing machinists and their families. (The machinist characters have been fictionalised, however.) It's a musical that resonates with Harmer.

"It's sort of dear to my heart," says the former East Ilford resident. "A lot of the men, including my own father, were Ford workers.

I didn't know any of the women workers," she adds. *"I experienced what they went through, you know, but I didn't actually know any of them. But certainly the men were all affected because those wonderful women (the sewing machinists) had brought the plant to a standstill.*

You know, the men weren't on strike, but they weren't able to work." Harmer reflects: *"That was the first time they (the men) really acknowledged that they needed the woman, and that was really the first time they acknowledged the women's contribution toward the cause."*

Although the characters in the musical are fictional, Harmer says: *"These characters are real. People there, you know, were all involved in it."*

Asked what her father had expressed at home about the strike, she says: *"My dad was of the generation where men didn't necessarily talk much about their feelings. It was more 'bread on the table' sort of culture, and he was a shift*

worker. He was asleep very often when I was awake. So he never talked about his attitude towards the women, and I think he was just resigned to it."

What Harmer was aware of was "a camaraderie between the men" because of so many plant workers living in her family's neighbourhood: *"Somebody's Uncle John would walk up the road, and my dad would join in and pick up Uncle Frank. They'd go off to work together; we didn't own cars in those days, so they'd go off to the bus stop to go to Ford."*

However, in spite of her father's keeping his thoughts about the strike to himself, Harmer suspects that he "would not have been enraged as modern man would be about the injustice."

"I think," she adds, "I got more of my awareness through the women" at home and in her neighbourhood "because when the men were laid off – they weren't on strike, they just couldn't work – the women were the ones trying to feed the children and pay the rents and so on.

My memory is more about the wives coming to my mother's home to our kitchen and sharing food. If someone had enough that they could share, or had made a big stew, they'd hand it out to other families and children."

Harmer says: *"My Auntie Joan over the road had six children, which was a lot of family to feed when your income's stopped – and we were back in the day when some women worked, but mostly certainly not of my parents' generation. They weren't necessarily working women. So, there was real hardship.*

My mum and the other mums might do a big mending of clothes. It had a big impact, actually."

At her young age, Harmer admits, she didn't "actively worry. I can picture my mum's kitchen and the women in it and the kids and the food sharing – I can picture it so vividly.

I think I trusted my mum – I knew we were going to be alright. I didn't go hungry," she says. "She managed somehow, you know, and today, that sounds a bit strange, doesn't it? If you missed a month's money, then you might not have food."

Reflecting on the musical itself, Harmer says: "Because hardship is still around, sadly, for lots of people, I think there's resonance in it now. It's just as relevant now as it was then."

What else sticks with Harmer today is the sense of community fostered within the Ford workforce and their families. The company provided a social club and grounds with sports facilities. Ford also arranged coach trips for their workers and families, even once the Ford employee in the family died. "I would say they were a jolly sound employer of the time," Harmer says.

In a Saffron Walden production of *Made in Dagenham* a few years back, Harmer played a machinist, singing in the ensemble. For the 2024, production in Cambridge, it's definite that she'll be on hand as production manager and a knowledge bank for Director, Megan Stickler-Sell. But an onstage appearance? Only perhaps. "I must not interfere with Megan's emerging vision but," she adds, "she might find me useful, you know. I'm a ready-made Dagenham girl."

DeeDee Doke
NODA East Regional Editor

Aberdeen Musical Theatre Orchestra: Magic of the Musicals

NODA Scotland

Once upon a pandemic, a couple of musicians based in the Aberdeen area decided to attempt the creation of a music video, focusing on music from the theatre. A few messages to some of their local pit musician colleagues revealed that there was support for such a venture, many of them missing the fun and camaraderie associated with playing for the local amateur theatre companies. After a bit of preparation, arranging, recording and editing, the video was created and shared, quickly becoming an online hit! Mention was made at the time that it would be good to perform this 'Overture of Overtures' live sometime in the future, when live music returned. So, three years later, it finally happened!

Under the musical direction of Fraser Gale and the administrative expertise of Callum Massie, a committee was assembled to plan a live charity concert, in which the overture could be performed. Obviously, an audience couldn't be expected to listen to a nine-minute overture and head home again, so a decision was made to invite a number of vocalists to perform songs, of their choosing, from various theatrical shows. A full two-hour concert was born, complete with an enthusiastic 28-piece orchestra (the old Broadway sound!) and 11 singers, covering material from the 1930s right up to 2023!

Over £3,600 was raised for local charities thanks to a sold-out venue and we still had to turn people away at the door. The musicians and vocalists enjoyed the evening immensely, in spite of it being one of the warmest evening concerts any of them can remember performing and the quality of musicianship on show was amazing. It looks like there might be an audience for this kind of event and thoughts are already turning to "the next one"!



NODApics

A few of our member submissions to our Instagram page



Chitty Chitty Bang Bang
Paisley Operatic & Musical Society



LegallyBlonde
Harlequin Youth Theatre



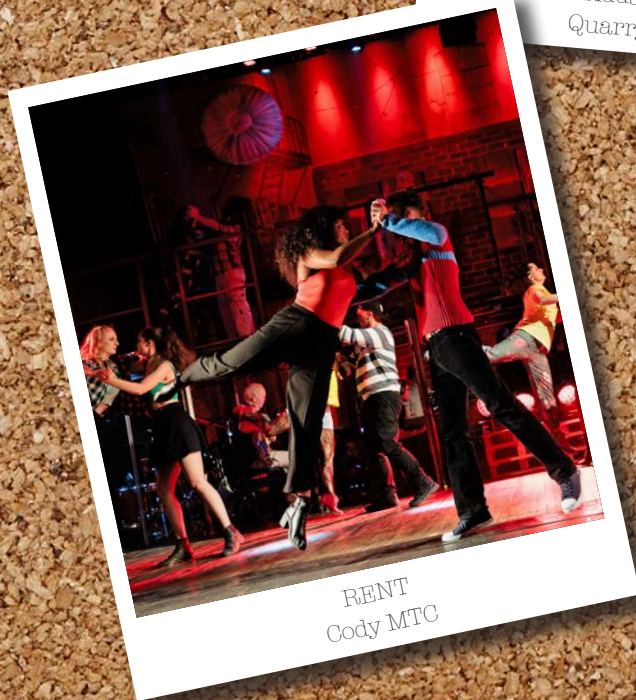
The Wizard of Oz
Kings Lynn Players



Addams Family
Quarry Bank MTS



School of ROCK
Workington AOS



RENT
Cody MTC



EVITA
Sharnbrook Mill Theatre



A Midsummer Night's Dream
Leighton Buzzard Theatre Group



Guildburys Theatre Company
FlintStreetNativity



Bonnie & Clyde
Fylde Coast Youth Theatre



Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat
Theatre Guild Glasgow

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The NODA North Performance Awards 2023

NODA North

NODA North was thrilled to once again hold their annual Performance Awards this October, in Newcastle.

The event saw 600 guests, from across the North dress in their finest and return to the Gosforth Park Hotel to celebrate their shared hobby: the wonderful amateur theatre that has been produced across the region over the past year. The day was attended by NODA National President, Christine Hughes, who kindly travelled to the event, and of course, the North's Regional Councillor, Peter Oliver. This year, the awards were hosted by local amateur performer Steven Linsdell-Bell.

These performance awards were a little different to previous years. In the past, both the youth and adult awards were held on the same night. Owing to factors such as time and spacing, it was decided that the youth awards were, this time, to be held in the afternoon and the adult awards to be held in the evening. This proved to be incredibly successful – the awards were much less rushed, there was more chance to socialise with others, the event wasn't too long for the younger guests and we even had the time for dessert and a disco! It was especially lovely to give the youth their own event, where the focus was rightfully and entirely on them, and a wonderful chance to acknowledge and celebrate the budding future of amateur theatre in our region.

The whole day, from 12pm – 12am, was filled with excitement, elation and energy. Nearly 80 youth and adult awards were won across the categories, which included: Best Individual, Best Supporting Role, Rising Star, Best Musical, Best Pantomime, Best Concert and Best Drama.

The NODA North Performance Awards were once again a huge success, and preparations are already underway for an even better event next year.





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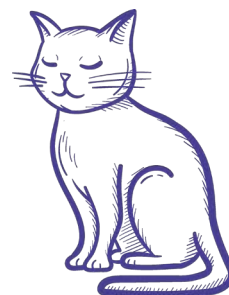




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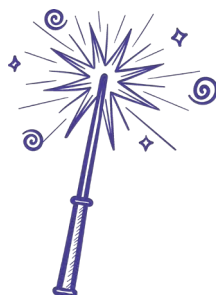
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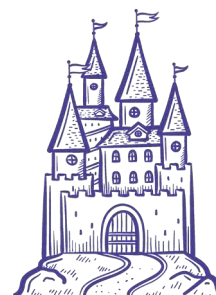
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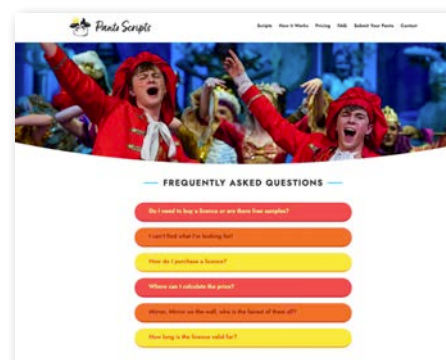
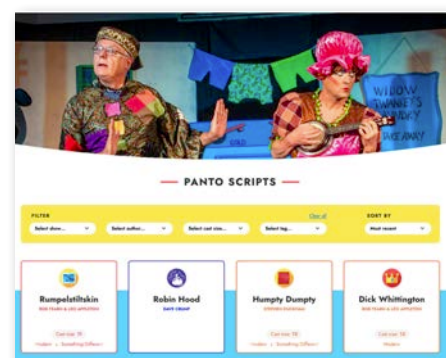
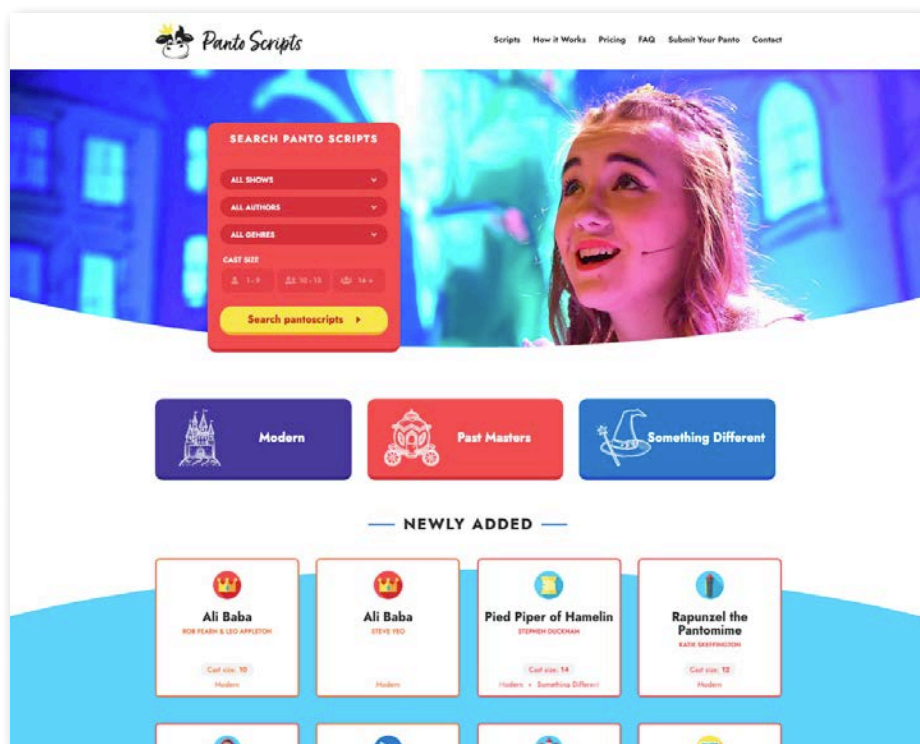


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Performers 'devastated' by Solihull theatre RAAC closure

NODA West Midlands

Performers 'devastated' by Solihull theatre RAAC closure

7 September



Raac concrete in schools



Tom Wilson, left, said the company were "gutted" the performance had been pulled

By Shehnaz Khan & Leona Smart

BBC News, West Midlands



"The Theatre is temporarily closed!" is not a phrase anyone ever wants to hear especially on the get in day for a production that's been in rehearsal for 5 months.

The story so far

My name is Joyce Eyre, I'm on the committee and a life member of Coleshill On Stage (formerly Coleshill Operatic Society founded in 1909). I'm very proud to also say I'm a NODA representative for District 6 in the West Midlands.

Actively involved in all aspects of amateur theatre for around 35 years, this article is written as a true recollection of a nightmare situation that, through no fault of anyone, could happen to any of us.

Having been cast as Ronnette during my early years on stage and also directing it some 12 years ago, I was delighted to be given the opportunity to direct the fabulous *Little Shop of Horrors* once again for COS.

The perfect cast had been giving their all over the summer months at rehearsals. As director, I felt they were absolutely ready to bring their performances to life.

The scenery was designed and made specifically to my requirements by The Theatre House. Tenement cloth was ordered for delivery and Audrey II puppets had been chosen from the vast array of amazing plants that are now available from Imagine. Musicians had been carefully chosen and, by way of a change, would be visible throughout as they were to be positioned on stage within the dustbins and graffiti on set.

Period 1950's costumes were carefully chosen and were all in place, whilst some wore them to rehearsals enabling the cast to really get into character, for others it was all about the shoes!

I'm a detail person and was so happy when I finally found the most amazing vintage till that was borrowed from Norbury Theatre.

Nervousness of those first stage kisses had been overcome. The notoriously challenging 'Call Back in The Morning' had been timed to perfection during rehearsal using ice cream sauce bottles in place of telephone handsets. Audrey's death was as slick, emotional and tear jerking as could be without actually having the spectacular Audrey II plant puppet in order to devour her.

The extensive props list was somewhat bizarre, including the 1957 issue of *Life* magazine and four bespoke plant pots, complete with impressive leaves, had been constructed ready for the dead people to wear during the finale.

The massive tick list of plans were in place and we were all TOTALLY ready.

Monday 4th September, 8:30 am

Pick up the hire van and drive to Imagine Theatre in Coventry. Pick up the plants, dentist chair, gas mask. Call at Meriden to pick up more larger props on the way to meet stage manager and theatre staff to unload into the scenery lift on the roof at The Core at 11.30 am.

Once safely unloaded we, my husband and I, then drove over to The Theatre House in Alrewas, to pick up scenery and hired props.

We were running ahead of schedule as it was now 2.45pm and had the second van load unloaded into the scenery lift in good time to drop the van back with no stress involved, as can often be the case.

On the Monday evening, we then did the full run, as per the rehearsal schedule, and loaded all the remaining props (used at the rehearsal) and our society's keyboard into our cars, in readiness for the get in the following day. Just to note that our secretary received a message from the theatre late Monday, to say that due to essential maintenance our get in would need to be after 1 pm.

Tuesday 5th September, 11:45 ish

Undertaking final preparations, I was at home covering a privacy screen 'like you do' expecting a phone call from our ASM and company secretary Tom Willson to say we could start unloading from the scenery lift and stage crew could start the build.

My phone rang as expected it was Tom *"Hi Joyce, are you sitting down? I've arrived early to grab some lunch before we set about unloading to be told the Theatre is closed and 'Little Shop' can't go ahead!"*

As my head was now full of questions, I immediately asked my husband to drive me to The Core to be with the crew of around 10 that were now assembled and ready to go.

On arrival at the theatre, I was greeted

by Tom and taken into a studio where he, and a senior member of theatre staff, explained the essential maintenance was in fact a test for RAAC concrete. As a precautionary measure, the auditorium was now closed to everyone including theatre staff. Tom then called an emergency WhatsApp committee meeting to discuss what we had been told which at this point was actually very little.

We had a few facts to consider:

- Alternative venue - even if one could be found our scenery and plants were prisoner in the scenery lift.
- The smaller studio at the theatre was offered - even if we could gain access to the scenery lift, the plant is so big she wouldn't fit through the door. Plus there is no stage or wings as such for it to be successful.
- If we did just one performance, the rights holders and hire companies would charge us for the total hire and the loss of ticket revenue would be catastrophic.
- Would we still have an audience if we were found an alternative venue?
- Suggestion of open-air venue, theatre offered support with staging, sound and lighting.

It wasn't an easy decision, however, the committee unanimously voted to



postpone or inevitably risk financial ruin.

You might think the above looks like an easy statement for me to write. At the time the heartbreaking emotions that we all felt on the day are not something I would ever want to feel again. It was such a unique situation in which to find ourselves, made more difficult as we were asked not to tell anyone outside our immediate group until the theatre themselves had communicated it to their staff. Try to imagine if you can, walking back from that meeting having to break some of our news to selected members of the crew, three of whom worked for the theatre!

Looking back, the key to ensuring I could sleep at night was communication with everyone, the rights holders, hire companies, The Core, plus our audience and members of Coleshill On Stage.

We also discovered we were not covered by our NODA insurance for anything other than up-to £2000 for abandonment which was obviously not the case. They advised us to claim from the council who own the theatre.

Undoubtedly, one of the worst things for me was the thought of explaining to my totally dedicated cast that the production, they had poured their heart and soul into, could not go ahead.

Wednesday 6th September, 8:05 am

Don't know about you, but I'm not one for answering calls from unknown numbers, however on this occasion I did.

"Good morning, Joyce, so sorry to ring so early, I've tracked you down via social media my name is Leona Smart and I work for the BBC, how can I help?"

Arrangements were made to do a live radio appearance with Leona on Radio WM. We didn't know how she could help, but as the day progressed there were now numerous other

theatres found to be affected and closed, Northampton, Stockport, Dartford, East Lothian, Carlisle, Cardiff and The National Theatre London to name but a few.

Until yesterday, not many people had even heard of RAAC and now it was headline news, and we were a part of it! This was the day I not only needed a PA, but a big box of tissues and a shoulder to cry on.

Tonight was supposed to have been our dress tech rehearsal. As everyone would have been on stage, it was decided we should meet up and discuss, cry, some even exchanged their after-show gifts. We also needed to gauge future availability for a couple of alternate dates in 2024, should we be able to transfer our license, maybe the only positive was for us to try and look forward. It was such a poignant couple of hours, with many wearing their costumes and everyone leaving bereft with a complete sense of loss and sadness for what could have been wonderful performances making memories that would last a lifetime.

Thursday 7th September

Should have been our opening night.

After speaking at length to the rights holders and hire companies, they kindly agreed not to charge us any extended hire as we were still unable to access the scenery lift.

We were due to appear live with Lindsay Doyle on Midlands today, however, the story was now going to be linked to other places affected by RAAC so was pushed back a day.

Friday 8th September

The Core did more extensive risk assessments and staff were able to take the scenery lift up to roof. They offered to return the scenery for us as their staff were unable to do their own jobs as the auditorium remained closed. I met staff on the roof and loaded cars with props to return.

Scenery was loaded into the van to be returned Friday afternoon, and plants were separated out to be returned by theatre staff on the Monday as was originally planned. We were very grateful for this, as this saved us hiring the van.

A Just Giving page was set up in an effort to try and recoup lost ticket revenue (used to help fund our community pantomime).

Our two minutes of fame, if you'd call it, that came at about 6.15 pm. I have been told my message was loud and clear as to how devastated we felt and the catastrophic aftermath to everyone concerned following the closure of The Core.

Where are we now?

The Core remains closed following further assessments, as there is work on the RAAC that needs to be done. The extent of the work is unknown at this point.

Very generous donations and our Just Giving page has helped stabilise our funds and will enable our pantomime *Sleeping Beauty* to go ahead.

Following a meeting with The Core, they have settled our costs.

Our license has been deferred to September 2024. I'm pleased to say that at present every cast member is ready, willing and able to perform.

“What makes us special makes us strong” - a group’s slightly delayed production of *Shrek*

NODA North East



Carlinghow Theatre Company’s journey to bring *Shrek* to Batley Town Hall began way back in 2019, when they secured the rights to perform this iconic show in September 2021, BC (before covid). After a “slight” delay, they finally managed to get the show on to the stage in September 2023.

Right from the word go, they wanted to make it “their show” by designing, creating and making every part of it. There were 3 main reasons for this:

Firstly, *Shrek* is an extremely ambitious and potentially very expensive production. Carlinghow Theatre Company (CTC) is a hugely talented society, but they are not wealthy! Initial investigations revealed that even if they were to sell every ticket, they could not even cover the cost of hiring the costumes, let alone all the other costs of putting on a show like *Shrek*.

Secondly, their mission is to bring high standard, quality performances to local people at an affordable ticket price. A study in the last few years, highlighted their area as being in the bottom 20% for engagement in the arts. *Shrek* seemed like a great opportunity to create local interest in musical theatre, but they didn’t want to have to put up their ticket prices in order to cover their costs as this

would exclude a lot of people. Not hiring in scenery and costumes meant they could keep their prices as low as possible. Similarly, they didn’t want to increase their membership fees and potentially preclude existing or new members from being able to take part just because of financial constraints.

The third reason for this mammoth task, was they are so fortunate to have a team of incredibly creative, dedicated folk who shared a vision, a passion and an excitement of taking on the challenge of bringing *Shrek* to life on quite a limiting stage space. The members at CTC all share the opinion that staging a show is about so much more than acting and singing; it’s about bringing together different talents and resources and creating the whole package. Their production team were “in-house” - Director, Jane Griffin, and Choreographer, Melanie Stephen, both have been members of CTC for over 20 years and MD Craig Parkin-Smith joined them 5 years ago.

In November 2022, six of the most artistically inspiring folk were sitting on the stage going through every page, every scene, excitedly throwing in ideas and suggestions. By the end of that evening, the basis of the whole set had been formulated. Fast forward to September, after months of designing,

building, painting and Batley Town Hall stage was transformed beyond recognition and their expectations - it was a magical, pop-up storybook which had come to life. Added to this were over 100 costumes, (every one made by the company), an array of props (including a fully functioning Pinocchio nose and Tupperware full of prosthetic ogre noses), a beautiful green-eyed dragon, a 3ft gingerbread puppet and a life-sized plastic horse called Normal Steve, and they had a show that was truly unique to them.

They were immensely proud of the fact that every single aspect of the show had been planned, designed, built, painted, sewn and made by members of the cast.

So, they had their magnificent set, amazing costumes, a dazzling cast and some stunning innovative choreography - all the months of hard work and dedication came together to bring a fairytale delight to a West Yorkshire town.

I attended the Thursday evening performance of *Shrek* and to say it was magical was an understatement. Every single aspect of the whole production was superb and although, yes, everything was made “in-house”, not one thing looked “amateurish” in any way shape or form; everything was very professional.

In the words of Jane Griffin, Director:

“What Makes Us Special Makes Us Strong...”

Les Smith
NODA North East
Regional Councillor



The joys of one act drama by the sea

NODA East Midlands

One act plays are sometimes an under appreciated art form. It takes a huge amount of skill to craft a plot and build characters that the audience invest in and then reach some kind of resolution, all within the space of 40 to 50 minutes.

Boston Playgoers have often used one act plays as social events or for play readings, but have found it challenging to put them on in full scale. We ran a night of a trio of one act plays several years ago, but this didn't sell very well. We know that other local societies have tried the same and faced similar problems. We can only reason that audience members prefer a full play; they want to know what they are getting for their money, but this is a huge shame as there are some brilliant one act plays out there. As a society, we also have a lot of budding writers and they often start by writing a one act play to dip their toe in the water. We support them by using play readings as a way for them to hear their writing come to life and allow them to go back and rework and redraft their scripts. It just always seemed a shame that there was no means of getting those one act

plays performed without financial loss to the society.

In 2017, one of our members recommended that we enter the Hunstanton One Act Drama Festival. Historically the society had always enjoyed performing as part of the Skegness Playgoers Drama Festival that was held at the Embassy Theatre; unfortunately that stopped running in 2012.

The Hunstanton One Act Drama Festival is staged at the beautiful Princess Theatre. The festival runs over the course of a weekend with societies from across the region getting to perform their one act plays. They have a panel of adjudicators who judge each of the plays, with the festival culminating in an awards ceremony on the Sunday night.

As a society, we tend to make a weekend away of it. Each society is given a one-hour tech slot during the day prior to their performance. We usually perform on the Saturday night, stay over and play tourist on the Sunday before attending the awards

ceremony on the Sunday evening. The weekends always prove to be great fun and our members come away with fantastic memories and the experience of performing on a different stage. Although there is clearly a competitive element, we have only ever found the community involved with the festival to be warm and friendly; after all they all share the same passion for theatre. The festival rules also add to the fun and experience. Each society has 50 minutes; starting with a completely bare stage, the set needs to be put in place ready to start. At the end, the set is struck quickly behind the tabs before they open to reveal an empty stage once again. Well planned setting and striking of the stage is an absolute must.

As a society, we have had great success with our entries over the years:

2017 – *Last Tango in Little Grimley*. We won Best Production, all four cast members were nominated for acting awards and Jo Warrick won the award for Best Supporting Actress.

2018 – *Where the Mushrooms Grow*.

This was an original script written and directed by one of our members, Kei Bailey. We won Best Production, and three members of the cast were nominated for acting awards.

2019 – *Clever Clogs*. This was an original script written and directed by Kei Bailey. We won Best Production for the third consecutive year. Kei won the award for Best Original Script. Three of the cast members – Jo Warrick, David O’Brien, and Dan Poulson – won awards for their acting.

Unfortunately there was a hiatus due to Covid, but we were delighted to return in 2022.

2022 – *Sunny Side Up*. Again, this was written and directed by Kei Bailey. We were nominated for Best Production. We won awards for Best Original Script, Best Technical for the set skilfully constructed by Julian

and Jo Warrick and an award for Best Supporting Actor for Dan Poulson.

2023 – *Last Orders*. This was written and directed by one of our newer members, Laura Griffin, and this was their first foray into script writing. Dan Poulson won Best Supporting Actor for the third consecutive year. We were delighted that Laura won for Best Original Script, particularly as this was their first time writing a play. Callum Forman was nominated for Best Actor.

Looking forwards we are already making plans for our 2024 entry and we hope to continue to champion our members who bravely share their own original scripts with us. For any societies considering entering, then we would strongly urge you to do so. The whole experience, from start to finish, is great fun. A one act play can be rehearsed easily one night per week without putting huge demands on time

for those people involved. Once on its feet and books down it can be run from start to finish twice in one night. Festival organiser, Stephen P.E Hayter, and the rest of the committee for the festival are incredibly welcoming and we are sure would be delighted to see entries from more societies, particularly those that have never entered before.

We have started to reflect on how few opportunities there are for local amateur writing to be showcased and for societies to be able to stage a one act play. We are in the early stages of starting our own similar festival, hosted by Boston Playgoers, and supported by Blackfriars Arts Centre. We want to provide further opportunities for societies to share one act plays and have a festival that celebrates local live theatre in Lincolnshire.



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Climb every mountain to raise money for their society

NODA North



Spennymoor Stage and Song are an amateur dramatics society who have been performing pantomimes and musicals in their namesake town for over 100 years. As you will all know, societies like these are vital to their communities, providing not only the culture and entertainment offered by theatre to audiences, but also granting members a safe space to build their confidence and nurture their passion for performing. They have members from aged 6 to 86, and in several cases have three generations of one family all involved and/or performing with the society!

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, fundraising has never been more important to small societies such as this one. With shows cancelled due to lockdown causing large additional costs and the cost of living rising, every penny counts, and the society always strives to hold fundraising activities throughout the year. Earlier this year, three young members decided something big was needed - literally

and metaphorically - and decided to climb the highest mountain in the UK to raise money for their cherished society. Stacey, Liam and Jayne (plus several of their family members) have been members of the society for over 15 years, now seeing the group as a second home where they've founded friendships that will last a lifetime.

They set the date for September 30th, as September marks the start of their rehearsal season for their annual pantomime and musical - and they were hoping for mild weather. At first, their fundraising target was £500, which they thought was fairly ambitious... Two days before the climb, they hit this target and raised the bar up to £750, which they had to increase again to £1000 just 12 hours before the climb.

On the day, the rain held off despite some fairly heavy clouds around the mountains, and they managed the climb by encouraging each other and chatting all the way. Donations

continued to flood in the following days (which included the NODA North Performance Awards, just a week after the climb, where Stacey and Jayne braved heels despite some muscle aches still remaining) and in total raised £1265 for the society!

The trio continue to be blown away by everyone's support and generosity. While the climb took a fair bit of personal motivation for each of them individually, the encouragement from knowing that they were doing something great for the society was all they needed to keep going. They're back in full swing of rehearsals now for their pantomime *Cinderella* and *Hello, Dolly*, to be performed at Spennymoor Town Hall.

While they may never climb Ben Nevis again, the society are always looking for new ways to bring in funds to ensure the survival of the society for future generations - hopefully some slightly less physically challenging ones next year!

Camel Run for Joseph

NODA South East



Richard Bond from Basingstoke Amateur Theatrical Society (BATS) says: *"We had a dream, but not just 'any dream will do'."*

Sadly, there are too many people who don't have the opportunity to enjoy the magic of theatre due to their medical condition and limited availability of relaxed performances at local theatres.

We wanted to do something about it and set about our latest community project 'Joseph for all'. Using our contacts, we reached out to secure funds from corporate sponsors, community funding and local councillors. As a society, we also wanted to contribute. That's when the idea of the 'President's Camel Run' was born. It had to be something eye-catching and linked to the show.

I try to keep active, but after my fourth knee operation, the doctors suggested I should give up running.

Therefore, running 10k was a challenge, let alone running it on a hot day in a camel outfit! We were blown away by the support, our initial target of £300 was easily reached and a final total of £860. These funds have helped to make our relaxed performance of *Joseph* a reality and allow us to add an extra special touch to the evening, as we plan to gift everyone attending, a memento of the event.

IODS's Sue Goodall: 60 years, 60+ shows and counting

NODA East



Do you know anyone who's appeared in every single one of your society's shows for the last 60 years?

Sue Goodall of the Ipswich Operatic and Dramatic Society (now IODS Theatre Company) joined the group in 1963, and *"has been in every production since then,"* reports her friend, Lindsey Gomez. *"Many long-standing member have missed shows here and there, but I don't know anyone who has been in every production, not missing one show in 60 years."*

And that's not just 60 main shows – Sue's also appeared in the group's concerts, charity events and its other community offerings. Plus she has served on the group's committee and has appeared with other local companies.

Says Lindsey Gomez: *"If anyone knows anyone who can beat this achievement, I would love to know! Congratulations, Sue!"*

Presidential celebrations

September 2023, saw the inauguration of Christine Hunter Hughes as NODA National President for 2023-24, in Preston.

Friday evening, delegates gathered for catch up with old and new friends from across the UK. A highlight of the evening was delegates competing in a theatre themed quiz alongside a traditional Lancashire hotpot!

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

Nick Lawrence's last duty as president was to award his President's Trophy, this year to Richmond Operatic and Dramatic Society, for their production of *Swive*.

Christine has always believed in the 'D' of NODA, so it was the perfect opportunity for St Ambrose Players to perform a Murder Mystery called *Murder on Opening Night*, which went down a storm. It was even more memorable for Christine, as her late husband, David, was a member of the group for 20 years.

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



Christine Hunter Hughes toasting NODA



Immediate Past President, Nick Lawrence, NODA President, Christine Hunter Hughes and NODA Chairman, Ian G. Cox



The handover of the chain - we promise, they had rehearsed it!



Nick Lawrence addressing the AGM



Whodunnit! The top table gathering clues during the murder mystery



Past presidents, Chris Ingram and Michael Hastilow preparing to duel



Michael McCaw, our MC for the evening, dancing the night away



Christine Hunter Hughes with the cast of 'Murder on Opening Night'

Kidderminster group celebrate 100 year anniversary

NODA West Midlands



It is doubtful if its founders Mrs Ellis Talbot and friends foresaw such a long life and such an array of successes for their new creation. It is likely that they contemplated no more than a few performances to liven up the tedium of the dull and anxious days of World War I.

In 1916, Mrs Ellis Talbot, and the ladies of New Meeting Church, decided to give a concert in aid of War Charities. Their first venture was Gilbert and Sullivan's, *Patience*, which was very ambitious as it was in the middle of the war and naturally there was a shortage of men. Consequently, it was not possible to cast the parts of the 'Duke' and 'Bunthorne' so two young men were brought in from Birmingham. They were Mr Frank Titterton and Mr Wesley Lowe, both later became very famous. They both gladly accepted a fee of 2 guineas! The chorus of Dragoon Guards and rapturous maidens, both numbering 16, including some very well known names, entered vigorously into their rehearsals.

The Kidderminster Opera House, which was empty at the time, was acquired. Authentic costumes, originally used by the D'Oyley Carte Company were hired at a cost of 20 guineas. The scenery was built by members of the society under the direction of Mr Bostock, whose brother later became a president of the society. An orchestra was got together under the baton of Mr E.J. Pountney, a local cinema and music shop manager.

The following year another G & S operata, *The Gondoliers* was presented for 3 nights with seat prices ranging from sixpence to 5 shillings. In that year, the society became affiliated to NODA. In 1918, a production of *The Mikado* was staged and for this free electricity was provided by Mr J.A. Lycett, the manager of the Electric Power Company.

It must be remembered that in the beginning of KAOS (Kidderminster Amateur Operatic Society as it was initially named), there was no radio

or television to compete for the audiences. When these media came into being, the thinking of the society had to alter. The new idea was to perform bigger and better productions. The society then progressed from comic opera to musical comedy. They included the works of native composers – Edward German, *Merrie England*; Paul Rubens, *Miss Hook of Holland*; Lionel Monkton, *The Arcadians* and many others. There were also the continental composers – Kalman *Gypsy Princess* and Oscar Strauss, *The Waltz Dream* and in later years, the American composers. In 1978, KAOS staged *PIP*, a Midland première of the musical play adaptation of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*.

The society continues to break new boundaries with shows like *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, *Singin in the Rain*, *Hot Mikado*, *Our House*, and *The Wedding Singer*, as well as the old favourites *Carousel*, *Oklahoma*, *Oliver* and *My Fair Lady*.

In 1979, the society performed its first play *Not Now Darling* and has continued to perform a play very successfully every year since. As a consequence, the society later decided to make an alteration to its name to include 'Dramatic' in the title, hence it is now 'Kidderminster Operatic & Dramatic Society' (KODS).

All the society's early shows were presented at the Opera House, Kidderminster except in 1939, when *No No Nanette* was staged at the Public Baths in Castle Road, now renovated into flats. After the 1st World War, the Opera House became 'The Playhouse' and was administered by the 'Nonentities Society' until its

closure in 1969, to make way for the ring road. The society then had to find a new venue, so moved to the Civic Centre, Stourport on Severn and remained there until 1986, when it moved back home to Kidderminster to perform a play at the Rose Theatre which is owned and administered by the Nonentities Society. The play chosen was *Spring and Port Wine*. Following many discussions to overcome extensive difficulties, the society performed its first musical *Oliver* at the Rose Theatre in February 1987, a decision that has never been regretted. Rehearsals for both plays and musicals have, for the most part, been at New Meeting Hall, Church Street, Kidderminster.

During 1990 the then Chairman, Mr Malcolm Wright, suggested introducing a youth element into the society to encourage young talent. Consequently, the youth section KODYS was formed comprising of children between the ages of 9 and 16 years and this has since been extended to 18 years. KODYS have performed successfully many of the years since with a break between 2004 to 2009. The productions have ranged from various musical based concerts to full blown musicals including the NODA award winning *CATS*, *Bugsy Malone*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Back to the 80s* and many more. KODYS now has a long waiting list to join the youth section which is testament to their success.

Over the years the society has been well served by both officers and members. KODS is now well into its second centenary period where it has taken on newer and generally more challenging shows such as *Made in Dagenham* and *The Addams Family* with the next 2024 production being the very exciting *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*. Who knows what great shows KODS will bring to the Rose Theatre, Kidderminster in the future.

Century up for Barnstaple MCDS!

NODA South West



Old and New - L-R Julie Snooks, BMCDs Treasurer, Katie Jones NODA, Pat Potier, member since 1947 (the Arcadian), Graham Ruhleman BMCDs Chairman, Sue Spiegelhalter, BMCDs President and young member, Myma Kingdon, 11.

Award-winning group use review to celebrate the past and the future!

If someone had told the small group of players who clubbed together to put on a show to entertain friends and family in Barnstaple that, 100 years on, this group would still be going strong and captivating audiences in their own community, it's hard to imagine they could have believed it.

In 1923, Barnstaple Musical Comedy and Dramatic Society came into being with a burst of energy, presenting *Dogs of Devon*, a light operetta, and later that year, *A Country Girl*. 100 years on, the society has weathered wars, fires, recessions, pandemics and, still with family links going back to its founders, the group has been celebrating in a glittering review. Today, the group is among the most successful and consistently acclaimed societies in the South West, most recently picking up an award for its incredible production of *Shrek* in 2022.

The company has always chosen its

productions carefully and the shows have always been representative of the best that popular culture has to offer. Halted by WW2 in 1938 to 1947, and, of course during the events of 2020, the group has consistently performed with its customary fervour, raising the spirits of the community.

Where amateur theatre differs from professional is the love and hardwork that members invest in every production for free. The benefits that theatre brings to its members are scientifically recognised as a unique tool for expanding personal development, expanding horizons, building confidence and forging new and lifelong friendships. BMCDs is resolute in giving all comers a chance and sharing these gifts.

The glittering review was created in the midst of the most busy time for the company, fresh from their youth production of *Matilda* and knee-deep in rehearsal for *Nativity!*, this couldn't have happened at a busier time. The group has collected a fascinating chronology, with records of every single show the society has ever undertaken with the exception of the programmes for *Dogs of Devon* and *A Country Girl*, both of which they sent out an appeal to anyone who may have one in their attic.

Society Chair, Sue Spiegelhalter compered the review, with incredible insight into its history as well as its future. "This group just continues to grow in strength, number and talent. I would like to think the members of the past are looking down on us with love and pride – we are certainly proud and very excited about our future. Here's to the next 100 years of BMCDs bringing theatre to life!"

Katie Jones

Meet the NODA Head Office Team



Dale Freeman - Chief Operating Officer

I am extremely pleased to say that at the beginning of 2017, I was offered the role of Chief Operating Officer, a position I was very proud and pleased to accept. I am now in my 18th year with NODA. Working as Membership Services Manager gave me an invaluable insight into the mechanics of this wonderful organisation and, equally importantly, the needs of you, our members. It has been a real privilege for me to attend some of the regional conferences as part of my role and meet so many of you wonderful and inspirational people. I look forward to meeting many more of you in the coming years. Please do feel free to call for a chat or drop me an email: dale@noda.org.uk



Rob Williams - Marketing and Publishing Executive

Rob is now in his fifth year with NODA. Rob has been involved with theatre since being at school, first onstage, then technical design before finally moving into theatre management. Having worked in both professional and amateur theatres, he brings a wealth of marketing experience to NODA. He is still heavily involved with his local theatre both onstage and directing, as well as being a trustee.

Rob is responsible for the publication NODA Today and all things marketing within NODA. Rob's email address is rob@noda.org.uk



Michelle Callicott - Financial Controller

Michelle joined our team in May of 2022 and comes to us with a vast knowledge and experience of all things financial and is a valued asset to the charity.

Michelle's email address is finance@noda.org.uk



Liam Nixon - Marketing and Membership Services Assistant

Liam has been involved within theatre from a young age and has now begun choreographing and directing shows within his local theatre company. Through the use of social media, Liam will be able to bring his skill set to the forefront and help grow NODA's online presence as well as helping our members day to day.

Liam's email address is liam@noda.org.uk



Heather Knapp - Administrator/Secretary

Heather joined the NODA head office team in November 2023, and brings a wealth of experience both in administration and in other roles within the charity sector. She has been awarded her 25 year NODA medal as she has been involved in amateur theatre since 1997. Heather is an active committee and performing member of two NODA member societies and also acts in professional murder mystery events.

Heather's email address is - heather@noda.org.uk

Who's who on NODA Council

President

Christine Hunter Hughes

christine.hunterhughes@noda.org.uk

Regional Councillor - London

Pam Armstrong

pam.armstrong@noda.org.uk

Regional Councillor - South West

Graham Liverton

graham.liverton@noda.org.uk

Chairman

Ian G. Cox

ian.cox@noda.org.uk

Regional Councillor - North

Peter Oliver

peter.oliver@noda.org.uk

Regional Councillor - Wales & Ireland

Sharon Davies

sharon.davies@noda.org.uk

Immediate Past President

Nick Lawrence

nick.lawrence@noda.org.uk

Regional Councillor - North East

Leslie Smith

leslie.smith@noda.org.uk

Regional Councillor - West Midlands

Andy Brown

andy.brown@noda.org.uk

Vice President

Graham Liverton

graham.liverton@noda.org.uk

Regional Councillor - North West

Andy McNicholas

andy.mcnicholas@noda.org.uk

Life Member

John W. Barnes

john.barnes@noda.org.uk

Regional Councillor - East

Tessa Davies

tessa.davies@noda.org.uk

Regional Councillor - Scotland

Stuart McCue-Dick

stuart.dick@noda.org.uk

Life Member

Gordon Richardson

gordon.richardson@noda.org.uk

Regional Councillor - East Midlands

Jules Jones

jules.jones@noda.org.uk

Regional Councillor - South East

Kay Rowan

kay.rowan@noda.org.uk

NODA Theatre Summer School

Jacquie Stedman

jacquie.stedman@noda.org.uk

Regional vacancies

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

NODA North

Regional Secretary

peter.oliver@noda.org.uk

NODA North East

Regional Representative (Drama)

East Yorks, Malton & Pickering

leslie.smith@noda.org.uk

NODA North West

Regional Representative

Preston, Fylde & Isle of Man

andy.mcnicholas@noda.org.uk

NODA North West

Regional Representative

Burnley, Clitheroe, Blackburn & Haslingden

andy.mcnicholas@noda.org.uk

NODA West Midlands

Regional Editor

andy.brown@noda.org.uk

NODA Wales & Ireland

Regional Treasurer

sharon.davies@noda.org.uk

Councillors' Chat

A quick note from your regional councillor



Tessa Davies - East Regional Councillor

We had a slow summer with very few shows being produced in July and August, but that has changed! The reps and I are currently attending 2, 3 or even 4 performances a week. There have been a few changes in reps in the past 3 months. District 9, which has been without a rep since April, now have, Scott Welch. Christine Davidson in District 8, has decided to stand down at the end of the year, for personal reasons, and Vickie Carey, currently an assistant rep, will be taking over. I wish both Scott and Vickie the very best. I also thank Christine for her service to the district and I am sure that the societies she serves join me in this.



Jules Jones - East Midlands Regional Councillor

The past few months have been very exciting in the East Midlands. We are now enjoying a full team of regional reps and several assistant reps ready to take over when reps retire. So many fantastic shows have been reported on and we have really enjoyed both youth and adult productions. Don't forget to get your show dates to your rep in good time as we are getting booked up for the new year already. All the best to everyone in the East Midlands region and a Happy Christmas and a dramatic New Year to you all.



Pam Armstrong - London Regional Councillor

The London region had an excellent contingent at the National AGM and Presidential Gala in September, which saw the inauguration of our new President, Christine Hunter-Hughes. It was a glittering event and very much enjoyed by all those who attended and was an opportunity to network.

How heartening it is to see the London region season is in full swing. I have been fortunate enough to have seen a number of excellent productions, in both dramas and musicals. It is gratifying indeed to know that so much talent abounds in our very own region.



Peter Oliver - North Regional Councillor

Were has 2023 gone, and what a great year it has been for NODA North. We have had several new societies join us and taking advantage of the benefits of NODA. Your regional representatives and myself have been to see over 90 productions this year which concluded with our successful performance awards evening at the Grand Hotel in Gosforth.

I would like to wish all our members a very happy Christmas and hope that 2024 brings you all joy and good health and in the words of Tiny Tim, God bless you all!



Leslie Smith - North East Regional Councillor

I hope by now you will all have got your tickets booked for our 2024 Gala Weekend, which as you know will be a Celebration of 125 years of NODA. We have a bumper, fun filled weekend for you all, so I look forward to welcoming you all in Bridlington once again. I have ordered the sunshine so remember to bring your beach wear with you.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very merry festive season and look forward to a happy, healthy and successful 2024.

Andy McNicholas - North West Regional Councillor

It's that time of year where many of our regional reps are preparing details for the various district awards events next January and February. Keep an eye out for the announcements in your inboxes and on social media. I'm also pleased to announce that the NW Regional Awards and AGM has been booked for 4th and 5th May, next year – let's see if we can beat this year's event where we had over 800 people attending! All that's left for me to say is to wish you all the very best for the coming new year.



Stuart McCue-Dick - Scotland Regional Councillor

Training has always played an important part of the work of the NODA Scotland committee. Following feedback from members we are delighted to launch our first national training workshop day taking place in Perth on Sunday 16 June. The day will provide a range of workshops covering singing, moving and drama and will be open to all members of NODA clubs from across the country. The committee hope to be able to roll these workshops out on a regional basis, going forward, to allow as many members as possible to benefit from them.



Kay Rowan - South East Regional Councillor

May I take this opportunity to thank all those very kind people who sent me messages of condolence on the passing of my husband, Roger – they were very much appreciated.

The past 3 months have been extremely busy with over 100 show visits. We have been very privileged to share in celebrating your successes – we can't wait for the pantomime season! I am pleased to announce that Susanne Crosby and Mark Allen have accepted the roles of Youth Coordinators – please get in touch with them for advice, or to invite them to see your show.



Graham Liverton - South West Regional Councillor

There have been so many shows that I have had the privilege of visiting and all of a very high standard. I am simply amazed, and I have enjoyed every single one of them. I thank you for the warm welcome that I have received!

Keep up the good work, I am looking forward to the pantomime season...oh yes I am!
May I wish you all a wonderful Christmas and a successful new year.



Sharon Davies - Wales & Ireland Regional Councillor

Since the last issue of NODA Today, we have had an increase in show visits and a very successful Gala Dinner and Awards Evening, the first since the dreaded Covid struck. Last year's was cancelled due to a shortage of numbers but, wow, did we come back in style! Our first chance to have a proper face to face get together, and it was enjoyed by all who attended.

This again goes to prove the resilience of our societies and the increase in confidence for the future of amateur theatre. Let's keep it going!



Andy Brown - West Midlands Regional Councillor

Where did this year go? I was always told 'time flies when having fun'. Maybe this explains why 2023 seems to have gone so fast. Having read so many wonderful show reports written by the team and seen what is likely by the end of the year to be around 75 shows, amateur theatre in the West Midlands is most certainly thriving!

Members of the Regional Committee, including myself look forward to receiving show invites from groups and seeing productions during 2024, and we wish everyone 'break a leg'.



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