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with Sophie!

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Welcome to the first edition of NODA Today for 2024! As we embark on another exciting year of amateur theatre, I am thrilled to share some key highlights with you.

This edition is brimming with incredible stories showcasing exceptional talent across the UK. From heartwarming

performances to behind-the-scenes dedication, each page resonates with vibrant passion and spirit.

At NODA, we understand the pivotal role youth plays in shaping the future of theatre. It's heartening therefore to see the dedication of groups in nurturing young talent, both onstage and behind the curtains. Explore page 22 to witness inspiring youth endeavours.

2024 marks a significant milestone as NODA celebrates its 125th anniversary! Join us for our Celebration Weekend in Plymouth from September 27th to 29th, where we'll inaugurate our NODA President, Graham Liverton. Further details are on pages 33 onwards. I eagerly anticipate welcoming you to this event.

As we bid farewell to the pantomime season, you may be looking ahead to your next production so please explore our dedicated pantomime website - pantoscripts.org.uk - with nearly 200 scripts to choose from. There really is something for every group.

In closing, I extend my best wishes for your upcoming productions and a successful 2024. Let's continue to inspire, create, and celebrate the magic of theatre together.

Ian G. Cox
Chairman of Trustees

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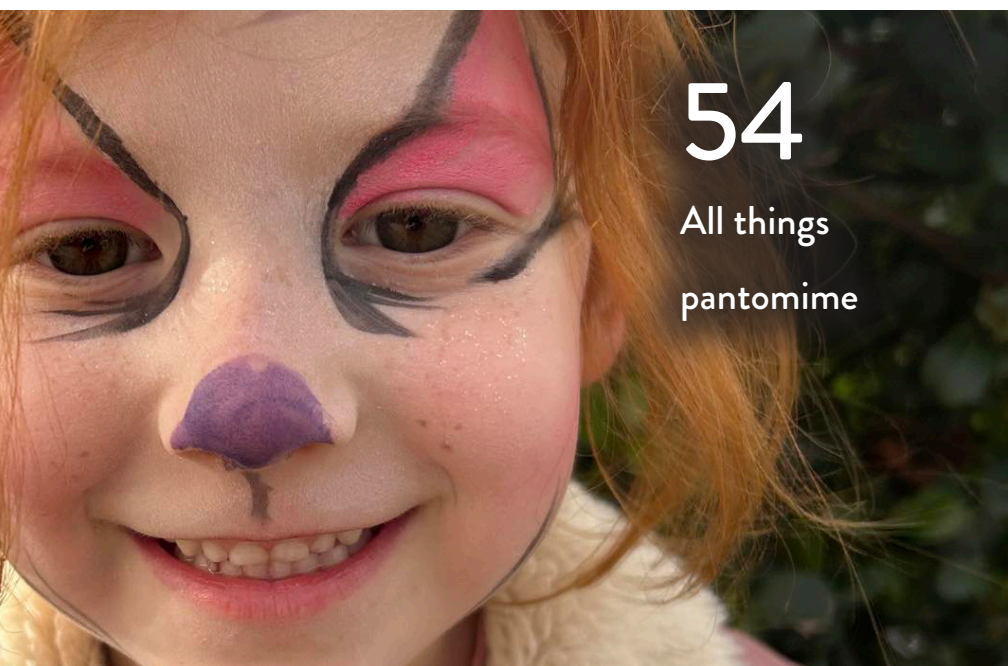




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Theatrefest Banbury – staging 3 shows (and a workshop) in a single week!

NODA London



SIX: Teen Edition

The town of Banbury is a very special place for those of us interested in theatre. With multiple societies in the area that all cater to a variety of ages, there is something for performers and audience members alike. As with all theatre, taste varies from musical theatre favourites to farcical plays. With this love for diverse theatre in mind, Avocet Theatre Company decided to set itself an ambitious challenge – could we stage multiple shows over the course of one week in an event we called *TheatreFest Banbury*?

With so many incredible local theatre groups, ATC, a registered charity, tries to offer something different for our members and audiences. As well as staging exciting musicals and our (in) famous pantomimes, ATC has also explored filmed performances, home-written pieces and community events. The amazing volunteers and hard working committee pour their love for

theatre into crafting exciting theatrical experiences, embracing a spectrum from traditional performances to unique showcases.

TheatreFest Banbury was a bold venture, with a clear objective – to open the stage to everyone, making theatre a collective celebration and expression. The ATC Committee discussed at length, the many questions that arose from the initial pitch of the concept. What would the shows be? How would rehearsals work? What are the technical logistics of such a venture? The outcome? A weeklong event featuring three productions and a workshop that would offer Banbury's theatre enthusiasts a diverse theatrical treat.

Performances would begin with *The Nativity: Away in a Manager (Manger!!!)*. One of ATC's unique ventures is an adult comedy web series entitled *Acting Out*. This mockumentary,

similar in style to *The Office*, follows a fictitious amateur theatre group whose behind the scenes antics cause mishap and mayhem. We decided to bring *Acting Out* to the stage for an adult focused comedy, inspired by the hilarious chaos of *The Play That Goes Wrong*. Our play followed Fletcher Amateur Repertory Theatre (or FART for short), as they attempted to stage a traditional nativity, but with disastrous consequences. The experience began as soon as the audience arrived, with planned 'mishaps' occurring whilst the audiences took their seats. Then, after the show, the antics would continue, with the 'FART cast and crew' in the foyer, dealing with Angel Gabriel's first aid emergency, Mary and Joseph trying to sign autographs, an ambitious member trying to flog her CD and the director grappling with excess programmes. Writing our own comedy play was a scary prospect. What if nobody laughs or has our sense of humour? Luckily, this wasn't the case,

and the audience were - thankfully - in hysterics throughout.

The next night, we staged *One Night Only*, a festive themed variety show that epitomised the collaborative process that is so important to ATC. Diverse talents, young and young-at-heart, seasoned and budding, united to create a magical evening filled with music, sketches and the spirit of Christmas. The response to this selection of acts was truly heartwarming and really got us all into the festive spirit.

The headline act of TheatreFest was *Six the Musical: Teen Edition*. Taking on this beloved musical was no small feat, but our six incredible young actresses delivered performances that captivated and resonated. The rehearsal process for this show was rewarding but tough. Whilst the show is only around 85 minutes long, the queens are never off stage and are acting, singing and dancing throughout. It's a real marathon! I advised the cast at the start of the process not to underestimate the challenge ahead. I told them to imagine it was an 85-minute monologue and to treat it as such with regards to the work they put in outside of rehearsals (of which we didn't have many!). Thankfully the amazing cast rose to the challenge! The energy from the cast and audiences at both performances was electric, the feedback outstanding, and the house was packed for two unforgettable nights.

Amid the grand spectacle of these productions, we didn't forget our commitment to inclusivity. On the Saturday afternoon, we also ran an SEND Theatre Workshop called *Embrace the Stage* where we invited young people with special educational needs and disabilities to join us for a festive themed workshop in the theatre. It featured acting, singing, dancing, costume design, mask making and more. Staff from a local special educational needs school as well as younger members of ATC supported

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The Nativity - Away in a Manger (Manger!!!)

the committee in leading the workshop sessions. On reflection, this workshop was one of the most rewarding things ATC had ever done. We received a wonderful thank you message from the headteacher of the local special educational needs school highlighting the importance of these opportunities for young people with additional needs who often feel excluded from such activities. ATC has since committed to continuing these workshops in the future, whilst strengthening our commitment to inclusivity in theatre.

This festival style process was no small feat! Behind the scenes, we faced

real challenges. Rehearsals were meticulously planned to accommodate our limited weekly sessions, and we had to add additional rehearsals to fit around the busy school and work schedules of the cast of *Six*. The staging and tech also provided us with a challenge, as we would need to change the set after each performance. We decided to plan the vision for TheatreFest around *Six the Musical*, and created an ambitious and impressive lighting rig that complimented simplistic but incredibly effective staging. Then, each performance would bring on additional set and items to dress the space for their shows. We would then do a mini

'get-out' after each performance and prep the space for the following night's performance. The format also meant we had to have a unique approach to the schedule for the technical and dress rehearsals for each show. The timings were tight and our amazing technical team pulled off a miracle when it came to programming the lights for the various productions. We were also blessed with patient and hard working cast members who were so supportive of one another and willing to help ensure the entire festival was a resounding success. After careful planning and lots of hard work, every production was ready to go in time. Each show had its own distinct identity and we were incredibly proud of the end results which were all a hit with audiences.

What touched us most was seeing familiar faces in the audience, back for more. The love for variety in theatre was evident, with our multi-show discounts resonating with our audience. It's a testament to the appetite for diverse, engaging entertainment.

As the curtains fall on TheatreFest Banbury, we're left with echoes of laughter and applause, a sense of achievement and the thrill of a successful experiment. Will we embark on such a grand venture again? Perhaps one day, so long as copious amounts of wine and hair dye are on offer! It was undeniably a lot of work, but the rewards, witnessed in the joy of our audiences, were immeasurable.

Theatre is obviously something truly special to all of us and we should champion diversity in our cast, audiences and the shows on offer. TheatreFest was a true celebration of all of this and highlighted the magic and joy we as societies bring not just to our members, but to audiences too.

Ben Coleman
Chairman of Avocet Theatre
Company and Artistic Director for
TheatreFest Banbury



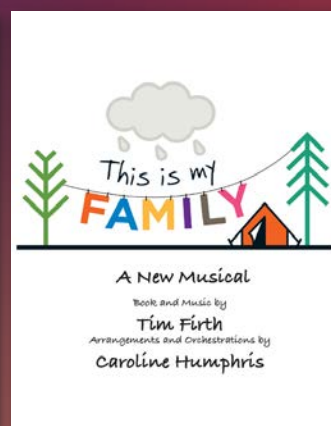
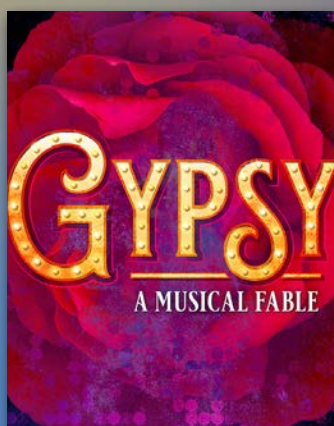
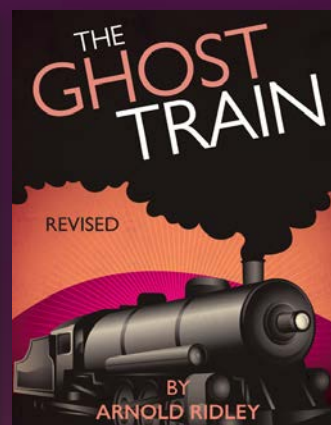
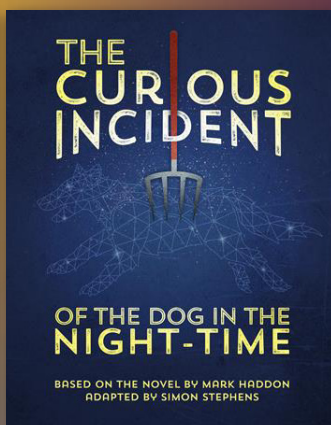
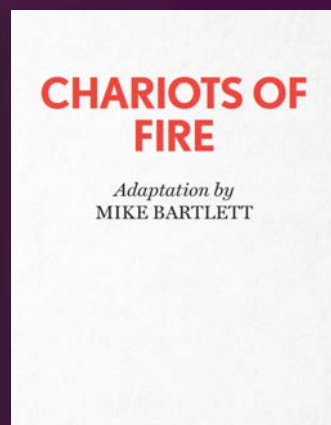
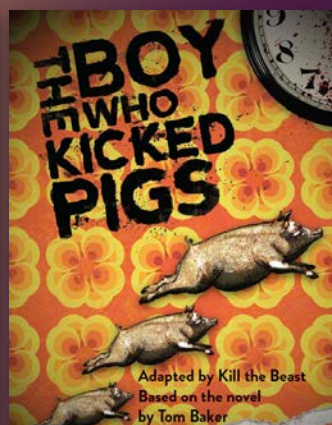
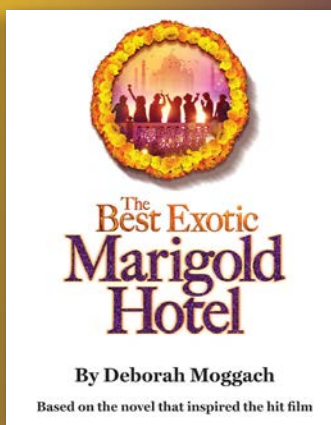
SEND workshop



One Night Only



SEND workshop



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When (not if) the lights go out

Does your group own traditional lighting fixtures?

Stage lighting is not just about making sure the actors are visible, and therefore audible. It engages the audience and lets them recognise the time, the place, even the mood of a scene. It is an art that I fell in love with when I was a student. Without lights, theatre would be just monochrome and uninspiring.

For some time, the professional theatre has been grappling with the challenge that traditional tungsten lamps are being phased out. This is due partly to legislation aimed at cutting down energy use and partly because tungsten lamp manufacturers are ceasing production because of falling demand. LED lighting is replacing tungsten and inevitably our amateur theatres must follow suit – or the lights really will go out, and that could include the house lights.

We are all now familiar with LED light bulbs at home but LED lights for theatre use are much more sophisticated and bring huge advantages – particularly the ability to change colour remotely on command. The downside is that each unit is expensive and requires changes to the theatre's electrical wiring: instead of being fed from the dimmer rack, each unit is plugged into a mains supply and controlled by a data cable which runs from the control desk in a 'daisy chain' from unit to unit. The good news is that you don't have to make the changes all at once unless you win the lottery, and you can introduce LED lamps as and when you can afford them, or find a bargain second-hand. A mix of LED and tungsten lights works well, though you may need to upgrade your lighting control desk first.

So, what should you and your drama group do?

If you have your own venue or have your own lighting rig that you take into venues, you should do three things:

1. Make sure you have a good stock of the tungsten lamps you use the most.
2. Start planning for the future purchase of LED lights, control desk and DMX data cabling.
3. Talk to other groups near you and explore whether you can collaborate to share the kit and the cost.

If your group hires a regular venue for your productions, make sure the management team there are aware of the impending changes. Find out their plans and, if appropriate, discuss how you can support them in the changeover.

New LED units for theatre use are being launched every month, all packed with clever features – and also expensive. There are also other LED units on the market for less demanding environments which may be suitable – but check first. I once worked with LEDs designed for disco use, only to find that it was impossible to read text or music under them!

Second-hand LED units are often available, but good ones are not cheap by amateur standards. However, the pace of development means that big theatres and hire companies will be selling on outdated kit, so it's worth checking their websites. This 'trickle-down' of lights from the professional theatre to the amateur is not new – I remember loading my Morris Minor with lights for my student drama group bought for 10 shillings each (50p) from the London Palladium...

Finally, remember: you are not alone.

The Association for Lighting Production and Design (The ALPD) and Central School of Speech & Drama are running a campaign that can support you. They can:

- Provide advice on dos and don'ts,
- Put you in touch with other groups who have already started down this path,
- And potentially, with friendly suppliers, help you source new or second-hand fixtures.

Contact Nick.Moran@alpd.org.uk

Nic Walsh is the Chair of Second Thoughts Drama Group, Stratford upon Avon. He is also an associate member of the ALPD

By George, an interview with Richard Sykes

NODA North East



In September 2023, Woodhouse Theatre Musical Theatre Company, together with The Lawrence Batley Theatre in Huddersfield, produced a totally new musical, *By George*, which had been written by one of their members, Richard Sykes. Although Richard was no newcomer to musical theatre and indeed to writing musicals it was still a big gamble for both the society and the theatre.

The show was billed as a *Chip Shop Musical* mainly due to it being set in a fish and chip shop and the bar of a local public house. The show went on and ended up being a big success, mainly due to both the writing and the actors who auditioned and were successful in their respective parts.

One quote from the NODA review is:

When it comes to unique and unconventional musicals, "By George" truly takes the cake (or should I say, the fish and chips) with its delightful blend of

Yorkshire charm and chip shop ambiance. This unexpected combination makes for a thoroughly enjoyable theatrical experience that is both entertaining and heartwarming. Even the Show Programme was a newspaper. The level of detail was immense.

I am fortunate to know Richard Sykes and had the pleasure of interviewing him following the smash hit, which was *By George*, here is my interview:

When did you start to think about George and what gave you the inspiration to think about the concept?

As I was growing up, at the end of my road was a chip shop run by a man who seemed to resent his customers and his lot in life. He'd always fascinated and terrified me, so when I was looking for material for a musical, I used the old adage 'write what you know' - and I channelled his eccentricities and the weirdness of my childhood to write *George*.

When did you start writing shows?

I wrote my first show at college. I'd written lots of songs but putting them together in a show seemed the best vehicle for them. I wrote a musical for my degree dissertation. The degree was in English and Music, so it seemed the obvious thing to do. The show I wrote at university was called *Good Grief* and, when my local operatic society was looking for something special to celebrate the Millennium production, I repackaged it, retitled it *Curtains* and got it produced. It was thrilling!

What other shows have you written and are they being produced at the moment, are you working on any other shows at the moment, what are your ideas for future shows?

Curtains ran in the north and south of England, but hit difficulties when Kander and Ebb's musical *Curtains* hit the West End. Though I'd written mine first, they had what's called

‘goodwill’ around their project and the subsequent name change killed interest in the musical. I worked on cruise ships for twenty years and wrote a lot for those stages, but the next full musical I wrote was *By George - The Chip Shop Musical* - so those two are the only ones written, orchestrated and ready to be performed. However, I’m working on three more projects at the moment and one of those is a musical. That’s ramping up for production next year.

What do you enjoy most about writing shows such as this?

The musicals are a way of collecting my ludicrous set of disparate talents into something greater than the sum of their parts. My imagination is scattershot - pinging different ideas and influences into each other constantly. My love for problem solving cryptic crosswords and organisation puts the ideas into structures and plots. But what I enjoyed most about writing *By George* were the collaborations: working with instrumentalists to enhance the score, the generosity of the theatre and the ingenuity of the theatre company, it was joyous.

Has *By George* been performed previously?

No. September 2023 was its only outing so far. It doesn’t surprise me that there have been previous attempts at chip shop musicals - places like that are very fertile grounds for interaction. Village chippies can be community hubs. The food doesn’t arrive immediately, often it’s cooked to order which means there is a wait of five minutes or so to get your food - plenty of time for gossip and juicy stories to emerge. There’s also a lot of tradition and theatre in what goes on behind the counter. From the interactions of whoever’s back there, to the drop of the cod and the splatter of the batter - it’s so familiar and that’s perfect for an audience’s collective experience.

Richard wrote a piece for the programme to give people an insight into the writing of the musical:

‘My knees gave way and I sat in an alcove sobbing - and I knew I’d never feel that way again. I was wrong.

It was September 2000 and I’d just finished the opening chorus number, on the opening night of *Curtains* with the rest of my Woodhouse family. On the way back to LBT’s dressing room No.3, I was overwhelmed with joy to hear the fallback speaker crackling with audience laughter and that - as the blubbing alcove-dweller would repeat for many years - was the happiest moment of my life. To hear a packed audience roaring with laughter and to watch them enjoying the songs and the spectacle of a musical that’s lived only in your head for so many years was utterly magical. On the last day of the run, the society’s then Chairman, Alan Warmby, took me to one side and asked: “Have you got any more of these?”. The answer was “Yes.”’

However, amidst the discussions of perhaps staging a chip-shop musical called *Wi’Bits* in 2002, something else happened on that opening night; an entertainment agent was in the audience and approached me to audition for some professional work.

A pantomime at Leeds City Varieties, a stint as a singer at Alton Towers and twenty years as a cruise director later, *Wi’Bits* was a vague memory.

I’d quit the sea life by the time 2020 rolled around, ditching the Captain’s cocktail parties, the shore excursions and the now-creaking enthusiasm, for a mountain of ideas and projects I wanted to work on. A play, a few apps and that chip-shop thing.

By this stage, I’d got a rough outline of a plot based around the traumas of Brexit, social isolation and songs including ‘Princess’ - a seven-minute character examination. It was hardly a must-see.

So, the saviour of *Curtains*, my sister-in-law Maria, grabbed her red biro and attacked the script. When she edited and starred in that first show, she was yet to become my sister-in-law, but similarly had learned a great deal from the haphazard, seat-of-the-pants 2000 production and the many plays she’d performed in since - including a recent spell on Broadway. Halfway through her edit, Maria put her pen to one side and told me my chip-shop musical was incoherent, ill-disciplined and unstageable. She put it nicely and she was absolutely right.



Maria finds editing tricky if she can't visualise what she's reading – which meant getting to grips with what the stage would look like. One sketched plan later, and suddenly the musical seemed, miraculously, to take shape. Side-plots were shelved. The tone was lightened. Comedy was ejected at some points and injected at others. Characters and songs were axed. Over the course of the editing and development process, 33 individual songs have appeared in the show. There are now 18.

There were three substantial edits to follow over the course of the pandemic. *By George* – as the show was now called – was ready to be seen by local societies with a view to staging it. Woodhouse, particularly current Chairman Neil Broadbent, backed it from the off. But another interested party was the theatre itself under the management of its newly promoted Chief Executive Becky Atkinson. With both theatre and society enthusiastic about the project, Neil and Becky discussed joining forces and, with seemingly no fuss or issue, *By George*

had two driving forces and a writer who couldn't believe he was going to get another alcove moment.

Once the project received its green light and an opening date, development came to the fore. The ultimate success of 'Curtains' was down to the luck of having a superb cast, musicians that could improvise from the sparse score hurled at them and the youthful exuberance required to be re-writing up-to-and-including the day the show opened. I was determined that 'By George' would be very different.

Two table reads among friends identified plot holes and pacing issues, but also highlighted that the script had hidden gems in its minor characters. Subsequent edits eradicated the flaws and allowed the gems to glisten. An LBT development day with the stage set taped out proved that even the toughest scenes were possible.

And so the production team took a deep breath and announced a casting call. Maria and I mentioned to each other that we were prepared for

disappointment and compromise whilst driving to the theatre on the morning of the auditions. But eight hours later, we were with the casting committee and theatre management in The Slug and Lettuce, completely elated. The show was not only fully cast, but handsomely so. Many performers had emerged unexpectedly and simply blown the panel away. The skill of the auditionees in nailing traits in a character that had never been seen before was beyond anything we could have dreamed.

Next came collaboration. The show stopped being mine. With every meeting the show gathered its own momentum. James Clare and the LBT team offered an immense contribution to staging and production, Neil's incredible knack for helming a show, added fresh insights – as did some obscenely talented friends, suffused in musicals, who leant their gifts so generously.

Keira, Rob, James, Harrison, Bianca and John have shaped the score. Listing each of their contributions would be impossible, but without any



one of them this show would simply not sound as good. Each gave me a masterclass in how to score correctly and inspired eureka moments. Adding a violin - then hearing Bianca improvise a soaring countermelody, learning that drum parts are better left sparse, and having a guitarist emulate a whole orchestra with the push of a pedal - were all highlights of my interactions with these breath-taking artistes.

But that was the pattern of every collaboration. I'd walk into props, staging or publicity meetings expecting there to be a barrier or cap to the creativity. Not once during this entire process has anyone said: 'No' - in fact, more often than not, the response has been: 'Oh yes we can do that, and have you thought about this, we can do that too'.

Throughout the production I've had the pleasure of the company of Matt Ogden for a series of podcasts. We made a pact early on that we would explain each week *By George's* journey from page to stage - all the good stuff and all the bad. We joked that if something went wrong it would make for a much better story. It turns out, we didn't need incidents, just enthusiasm. You can find cast interviews, the show's recordings and all 30 podcasts, on my website: www.richsykes.com.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to *By George's* première run: to the cast, crew, co-ordinators and company who've brought this very personal project to vibrant life, but also to the audience, for buying a ticket and supporting an unknown show - and undoubtedly making a grown man's knees give way once again.

By the way, if anyone asks me "Have you got any more of these?". The answer is "Yes."

Les Smith - NODA North East Councillor and Richard Sykes

Savoyards Singathon!

NODA South West



The Cotswold Savoyards hold 24 hour Singathon for local Sue Ryder Hospice!

Recently, the Cotswold Savoyards held a 24-hour Singathon at the University of Gloucestershire Chapel. The event was a huge success and they raised over £3000 for the Leckhampton Sue Ryder Hospice.

Sue Ryder is very close to the hearts of many of the members of the society and some have had very personal experiences in the use of their services at the Leckhampton Hospice.

The society's committee wanted to hold an event that would combine their love of music with their passion

for inclusion for the community and also to present an opportunity for the group to raise funds for this worthy cause. They decided upon an inclusive singalong and they had such a huge response from the local community and had local choirs, singers and society members supporting the event. The local MP and their President, Marilyn Hill Smith, kicked the event off and it was even featured on local radio!

Congratulations and thanks to everyone organising, supporting or performing!

**Mike Fitch
Cotswold Savoyards**



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



Second Thoughts - 'An Evening of Tom Stoppard'



Avalon Youth - 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat'



Ewhurst Players - 'Beauty and the Beast'



Kids from CRIGG - 'Shrek Jr'



Craven College Performing Arts - 'Guys and Dolls'



RATS Ribchester - 'Cinderella'



SSA Drama - 'Robin Hood'



Stage 2 Downham - 'God of Carnage'



Spennymoor Stage and Song - 'Cinderella'

I think I have the best job in the world – undertaken on a purely voluntary basis of course! I have always been impressed by the wealth and variety of entertainment provided by amateur groups up and down the country, and the talent across all disciplines, not just on stage, but all who make and design the costumes and the set, control the lights, stage manage, crew and work backstage, chaperone, front of house, and, of course, perform.

After Covid, which quite naturally, and very unfortunately, brought us all to a grinding halt, societies seem to have 'come back' with a vengeance. I have been privileged and delighted to see many productions and performances which would enhance any professional stage, along with technical expertise, which has left me speechless (no mean feat I assure you), costumes, scenery and props all made and painted 'in house' by dedicated society members. I have also heard of some of the issues and problems you face which I will be certain to pass on to the NODA Council. (Do read the article in this issue about *When the Lights go Out*).

As those of you who follow me on Facebook (NODA President) will know, I have seen a huge variety of shows, with one thing in common – keen and enthusiastic people, working together, thoroughly enjoying themselves and in doing so royally entertaining their audiences.

From my point of view though, the best bit of all is the wonderful warm and friendly welcome I have received wherever I have been, which I am so grateful for – thank you so much to every single society that has invited me. You have all welcomed me so wonderfully into your society for the evening (or afternoon in some cases) so that I have felt a part of your NODA family. To those I was unable to attend, many, many apologies, but I am president until the end of September, so if you have another show before then, do please consider inviting me.

Thank you all once again, I am SO grateful for the opportunity to serve as your president once more, and am enjoying it all so very much, please remember: -

Any and EVERY NODA society can invite the president to their show (it does not have to be a special occasion) and the 'D' in NODA is for dramatic!

To invite Christine to your next show, email:

christine.hunterhughes@noda.org.uk

On the wings of a griffin, a Luton group flies forward into 90th year

NODA East

The Griffin Players of Luton, Bedfordshire, get a bit of free marketing every time a vehicle manufactured by the Vauxhall company wheels into view. The iconic griffin, a symbol of a mythical creature with the body of a lion and the head/wings of an eagle, adorns Vauxhall vehicles. It also is the symbol of the amateur dramatic society that was launched by the vehicle maker 90 years ago as a benefit and side activity for its workforce.

The Griffin Players and Vauxhall cut the ties of their formal connection some years ago, but the Players retain the symbol that reflects their proud origins in a tip of the hat to their Luton location and their historic corporate past. "We still go with the Griffin's banner," said Josh Thompson, the group's chair and a member for 17 years. "This celebrates our heritage of having been part of the Vauxhall society."

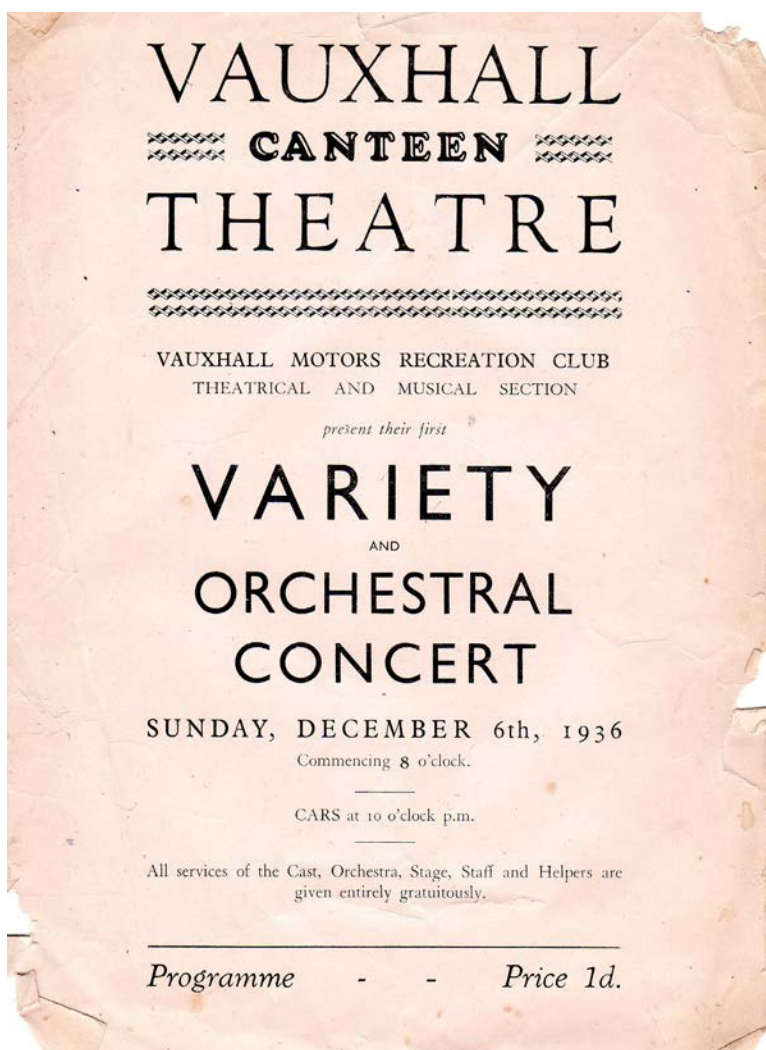
And at their 90-year birthday, the Griffin Players continue to build on their historic foundation and grow a local dramatic heritage that includes creating online dramas and staging a highly successful annual pantomime as well as plays and musicals. To celebrate their 90th, the Griffins are producing a musical tribute show, *Live! Griffins Through the Ages*, on 10-11 May, at the Luton Library Theatre. The production will include many songs from the Griffins' glorious past, with some omissions due to rights issues and appropriateness for the entire family.

"We've got a couple of songs being sung by the original (Griffin production) cast members, which is really, really cool," said Thompson. "Trying to choose the songs that are suitable and family-friendly is problematic!"

Over the years, the Griffins have coped with World War II and its impact on the Luton Vauxhall factory, a six-year hiatus in the 1970s and, more recently, the global pandemic. But the group forges ahead. "We want to spread the love for the community," Thompson said. "After lockdown, it's been so difficult, and we want to make sure that everyone can experience theatre – it's such an engaging medium and so fabulous, people are bound to watch."



Our first mini pantomime - 1980



Nothing like two dames in the family

NODA Wales and Ireland



It was definitely a family affair in the Glantawe Theatre Company's production of *Beauty and the Beast* in January.

Tony Evans played the role of Didi Domestique and was joined on the

stage by his daughter Lowri and granddaughter Gwenllian. On top of this the show was directed by Tony's son Rhodri.

This was his sixth time playing the dame for the company, but the first time on

stage in pantomime for a few years.

It was something of a bittersweet time for the family though as Tony's dad, Denzil, passed away the week of the show at the age of 94.

Denzil was a NODA Long Service Medal holder having first performed in a musical whilst in the RAF in 1948. He was an inspiration to the family and through his love of musicals introduced them all to performing.

In the best tradition of theatre though, and knowing that is what Denzil would have wanted, the show went ahead and played to capacity houses.

The company now looks forward to their Youth production of *Sister Act Jr* to be performed in May.

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Lyme Regis Panto Group celebrates their long servers!

NODA South West



Society takes time after a production to recognise so many contributions!

For their February production this year, Lyme Regis Pantomime Society presented that traditional all-time favourite *Cinderella*, which was the very first production staged by the society when it was formed in 1985. With a super script written by Alan P Frayn this well-known tale exploded onto the stage in rip-roaring style, full of colourful co-ordinated costumes, eye-catching backdrops, excellent performances and plenty of audience participation. Oh yes it did!

After one performance on a very wild, wet and windy February night, the society took the opportunity to recognise the commitment and hard work of 10 of their long-standing members. To quote their Treasurer, Bev Rattenbury: "*The Pantomime Society has been running for 40 years with many locals treading the boards,*

and we have the pleasure this year of presenting NODA Long Service Awards to our loyal members - 5 Awards for 25 years' service, 2 Awards for 20 years, 3 Awards for 10 years and a NODA Official Badge for a member who has given so much of their time and love to the society.

Lyme Regis Pantomime Society is a family who support, bloom and cherish their members, some who have gone on to work in the West End and onto university to continue their love for the theatre. Here's to the next 40 years and many, many more!"

Receiving the awards were:

- 25 years: Sarah Causley, Producer; Gemma Hatton, President; Tanya Rattenbury, Principal and Wardrobe; Bev Rattenbury, Treasurer; Brian Rattenbury, Principal and Stage Crew – currently rehearsing the community production of *A Midsummer Lyme's Dream*.

- 20 years: Amanda Rattenbury, Principal & Choreographer; Kate Causley, Tea Lady, Front of House & Chorus.

- 10 years: Harvey Causley, Principal & Musical Director; Dan Edwards, Principal, including long-standing Dame; Dave Street, Principal, including Baron & Dame.

- The Official NODA Badge was awarded to Committee Member, Annette Denning, in recognition of her hard work and enormous success in fund-raising for the society.

Unfortunately, due to previous commitments NODA SW Regional Councillor, Graham Liverton, was unable to attend and present the awards but sent his apologies, warm wishes and congratulations. The awards were presented on his behalf by 'Tricia Barclay, NODA SW Regional Representative, District 6.

Tricia Barclay and Bev Rattenbury

A combined 130 years' service to amateur theatre

NODA North



CAOS Musical Theatre Company recently proudly celebrated the long service of six of its members who, between them, have clocked up an incredible 130 years' service to amateur theatre. What is perhaps even more remarkable is that these members come from just two families within the organisation.

At the end of the group's production of *Mame* in November 2023, married couple Lee and Scott Brannigan-Howes were presented with their 20 Year and 5 Year NODA Long Service Awards respectively. Lee is currently the Chairman, Director and Choreographer for CAOS, as well as having involvement with many other organisations throughout the region. Scott is similarly involved with other organisations and is currently a member of the CAOS Management Committee and Assistant Choreographer.

Meanwhile, three generations of the same family also celebrated their long service with CAOS. Junior members Sophie and Charlotte Whitfield, who have performed in all of the society's Summer Schools and

Junior Productions received their 5 Year NODA Long Service Awards. In addition, their mum Jo Whitfield, who is currently CAOS Ticket Manager and Junior Production Manager, received the silver bar for her 35 Year NODA Long Service Award. Impressively, Jo's Dad (and the girls' Grandpa), David Ranson was presented with the diamond bar for his 60 Year NODA Long Service Award. David has served with CAOS since joining the society as a teenager, initially performing on stage before working backstage, helping construct scenery, and working front of house. He has served for forty years on the Management Committee, thirty years of which, until just recently, as treasurer.

CAOS Musical Theatre Company celebrated its 120-year anniversary last year, having first established as Chester-le-Street Amateur Operatic Society in 1903. Family is and always has been central to its success, with many members of the same families following in one another's footsteps throughout the years, and this is highlighted by this year's NODA Long Service Awards.

The King's Award for Voluntary Service

Following nomination and letters of support, we were delighted to be formally informed in November 2023, of His Majesty The King's approval that Volunteers of Carmarthen and District Youth Opera should receive *The King's Award for Voluntary Service*. It is the highest award a local voluntary group can receive in the U.K. The award is one of only six in Wales, and of 262 throughout the U.K.

KAVS aims to recognise outstanding work by local volunteer groups to benefit their communities. Created in 2002, to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee, and following his accession, His Majesty The King emphasised his desire to continue the award.

The award is a fitting and well deserved accolade for all CDYO Volunteers past and present, who have been and continue to be such an important cornerstone of the success of CDYO, and without whom we, as an organisation, would simply not exist.

Our volunteer strength is one big team, some of which you will see welcoming you in the Lyric foyer, and in hospitality. Most, however, work "behind the scenes" and include the production team, those involved with lighting, sound, wardrobe, hair / make up, staging, publicity, chaperones and management.

All these volunteers (on average numbering around 75) give their time freely, and many of whom have been volunteers since the early years of the company. For a number of people, being a CDYO volunteer is a year round commitment, but for most, it spans from September to February, and for some during show week only.

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**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

Everyone has a chance to shine



“Enjoyable! Everyone has a chance to shine,” spoken by a member of the Uckfield Theatre Guild Youth Group when asked why they attend each week. From its humble beginnings in 2018, with just a dozen or so members, our youth group has grown into a thriving community of over 50 young people, ranging from the age of 6 to 15 years old. It was created because we found that there is a lack of local, affordable, theatre fun in our town and we wanted to fill that space. Acting,

vocal skills and dance are taught each week by our dedicated team of adult leaders, helping the children to grow in confidence, boost their self-esteem, and providing ample opportunities to perform in the musical shows and pantomimes with the adult members by their sides.

Many of our young people have expressed how much courage and self-assurance being a part of this group has given them. In 2023, our youth group performed *The Addams*

Family Musical entirely without adults, neither on stage nor in the wings. These young people impressed everybody with their musical theatre skills as well as backstage crew. We are lucky to be able to teach such talented young people: future runners, sound technicians, stage managers, costume designers, directors, actors, dancers, choreographers and singers.

In April 2024, the Theatre Guild are putting on a production of *Oliver!* with one of our youth members, Imogen, playing the titular role. This is the first time such a large cast of youth are fully integrating with our adult members in a full-scale production. Our youth group is where young people can meet to socialise, make new friends, learn new skills and have fun, providing great opportunities for young people to experience performing in front of a live audience and creating long-lasting memories.

Sharon Gladman

It was a dark and stormy night!



It was a dark and stormy night in 2017, when my mum got a call asking if I would be interested in a local panto, *Pinocchio*. I went along to the village hall, I was expecting to be cast as a background puppet or perhaps one of the boys who transforms into a donkey. However, I was cast as Jeremy Corbyn! Instead of being onstage with the usual panto characters, I was acting with Nigel Farage and Shrek. This perfectly summed up the panto and one of the reasons I've stayed with the Players. After Corbyn, I played a gecko called 'Gek', - as in *Ant and Gek* - in a parody of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*; a parrot in the *Legend of King Arthur* and a little

street urchin in *Aladdin*. Each time I assumed that the next show would be a conventional panto but it wasn't. The Benenden Panto is unlike anything I've been in, and that's why I've stuck in it for so long. Each of the shows is related to the source material in title only, with characters and plot coming from the imagination of our incredible director/writer Bev Beveridge. She's been in panto for far longer than I can remember.

Every year Bev excels. Bev along with Graham, Ruth and Nancy have been a massive part of the Players for years and have been some of the best people

to work with. The group is so tight-knit that every time the rehearsals begin the six-month gap between sessions disappears. I've made so many friends throughout the shows and the atmosphere encourages everyone to come back. It's not the sort of group you leave. The small traditions and quirks, including the famous Saturday night performance rich with innuendo, become part of everyone who joins and all are welcome. Soon, I'll be heading to university but I'm confident in saying the Benenden Players haven't seen the last of me!

Seth Woolwich

Yew Tree Youth Theatre Celebrate 20 Years of National Theatre Connections



Ceasefire Babies - 2018

Kiss, Marry, Push off Cliff, by Josh Azouz, performed on the 2nd and 3rd of March is Yew Tree Youth Theatre's 20th National Theatre (NT) Connections production. Safe to say, when I directed our first NT Connections play *Mugged*, by Andrew Payne, I was a very different director. In comparison to what I know now, my metaphorical resource cupboard was sparsely furnished. My craft, as a director, has undeniably been built through creating plays written for young people, to perform to audiences of young people, as part of this brilliant National Theatre programme. More significantly, it is the NT Connections companies I have worked with over those 20 years, that have taught me how to be a director. It has been a pleasure and privilege.

NT Connections is an opportunity created by the National Theatre. Renowned playwrights are commissioned to write one act plays to be rehearsed and performed by casts of 13 – 19 year-olds. Approximately 200 companies are selected to take

part from schools, youth theatres and youth societies across the country and sometimes internationally. Directors of those companies then attend a weekend to work with the playwright, develop our knowledge and skills and have valuable conversations with like-minded people. Once we have benefitted from this valuable experience, it is back to our rehearsal rooms where we spend a very happy four months preparing to share the work with our audiences both locally and at a regional theatre.

Of course, over the twenty years of YTYT NT Connections, there have been so many highlights. Some of the scripts have been a delight to work on. So many of the young people that have been part of it have surprised me in the most wonderful way – achieving so much as actors and as people. Of course, when the National Theatre invited us to perform, *Ceasefire Babies*, by Fiona Doyle in the Dorfman Theatre in 2018, and so many people came to support us – that was a magical moment. But the main highlight has

always been the distance travelled by so many young people. Through their time doing NT Connections, they have learnt the craft of acting, the delight of feeling connected as a company and they have developed significantly in terms of their confidence, creativity and communication skills.

Cast members of our NT Connections Companies over the years have gone on to great things and happily so many of them have stayed in touch. We have doctors, dentists, prison officers, musicians, civil servants, social workers, teachers, actors, film makers, writers and, equally as important, mothers, fathers and caregivers. In February, we saw one of them shine incandescently as Jack Wolfe, who was in our production of *Shooting Truth*, accepted his What's On Stage Award for Best Supporting Performer in a Musical for *Next to Normal*. What's more, he acknowledged the importance of youth theatre as he did it!

Our NT Connections play this year, *Kiss, Marry, Push Off Cliff*, by Josh Azouz, tells the story of a group of young people who are on a camping trip after their A levels. It explores themes of friendship, alliance, justice and so much more. It also, like so many of the Connections' plays, focuses on places and events where adults aren't part of the equation. Empowering young people to find their space, their voice and their power is a transformative thing to be part of. The performances we will share in March and April are just a small part of the significance of what NT Connections does for the whole company, director included.

Sarah Osborne
Drama Practitioner and Writer
Director Yew Tree Youth Theatre

Shouting from the rooftops the benefit and power of amateur theatre

 North West



When I started secondary school in 1997, one of my class friends was part of what she called 'Drama Club' and asked if I wanted to go along with her. I went to a group that at the time was called 'BCMCS Junior Workshop'. I got my first role in their production of *Dracula Spectacular* playing a village idiot. My family found it hilarious, but I was over the moon! I absolutely loved taking part in the production, and at the time, was totally unaware I was part of what I now know as 'amateur dramatics', my main and most treasured hobby.

Over the years, I continued to participate in numerous youth productions, including *Joseph*, *Bugsy*, and *Guys and Dolls* to name a few. The production team and committee members of BCMCS were extremely supportive of us young performers, and whole-heartedly nurtured all the emerging talent and enthusiasm we had for performing. At the time, the society was under the extremely caring and watchful eye of the then Chair, Judith Stamford. I personally will always remember how lovely and encouraging she was to me, with little words of encouragement and a beaming smile on every opening night; so I was

extremely sad when she passed away a few years back. Alongside Judith, another of our previous chairs, and wizard seamstress, Kathryn Wilkinson, with our director extraordinaire, Gary Harvey, I was endlessly encouraged and given the support and platform to grow in confidence and really enjoy performing on stage. This moment came full circle last year, when I produced the society's musical production of *The Addams Family*, as choreographer, alongside Gary as director.

Fast forward to 2024, and I am now on my fifth stint on the production team for BCMCS. Having 'graduated' to the BCMCS Adult Musicals section in 2004, and taking on lead and ensemble roles, I began directing and choreographing for the society in 2017. My experience has been so fulfilling, to be in a position to offer young performers the same opportunities I was given when I started with BCMCS. Kathryn and Gary are still a huge part of the youth section, selflessly giving up their time and commitment to support, encourage and continue to nurture the talented youth, and feed them into the adult section of the society.

Earlier this year, I was extremely honoured to be awarded the District 5 Award for Best Director of a Youth Musical, for our production of *Matilda Jr*, which I also choreographed. It was such a pleasure to share the awards evening with many of our young cast, and to see the joy on their faces, as we were announced as the winners. This was the same joy I saw on stage in their opening night, and indeed on the faces of their parents as they watched on, with me crying with pride at the back of the auditorium.

I feel incredibly lucky to be part of such an amazing society, now brilliantly led by our wonderful Chair, Nicola Crompton-Hill. I want to shout it from the rooftops that BCMCS is a true example of the benefit and power of amateur theatre. I was shown support, encouragement and belief from such a young age, and it is my true privilege to now be in a trusted position like the adults before me, to be able to do the same for our stars of the future... Long may it continue!

Matthew Gavin

Henfield Theatre support young actors



In 2020, a gap in the local market was identified – support for young actors. Under the direction of Karen Blunden, Henfield has now delivered teen only productions. Teens from the Youth Theatre have also joined the adults in a couple of productions. One of these youths, Robyn Thomas, was in a lead role and nominated for Best Actress in the Brighton and Hove Arts Council Drama Awards. Robyn said: *“I’ve been performing with Henfield since I was 12. I was overwhelmed by the understanding from all on my first audition. Director, Karen, has always made the audition process enjoyable. Being part of the youth theatre company has allowed me to learn new skills, build confidence and*

form lifelong friendships for which I will be forever grateful.”

Luke Punt said: *“I’ve done multiple shows with both the youth and adult companies and loved every moment through performance. Every person involved, including stage managers, production team and parents help make Henfield Youth Theatre amazing.”*

Alex Carter said: *“I love working towards a performance and a highlight was ‘Teechers’ when the creative direction helped me develop.”* 16-year-old Ashtyn Rowarth has been a member for nine years and is now doing theatre studies at college. *“My introduction was*

Blood Brothers in 2021, when I met like-minded people and Karen’s direction has helped me explore both my comedic and dramatic abilities.”

With the Youth Theatre being well received, a theatre school for younger children (eight upwards) was proposed with a view to these children joining the Youth Theatre and then onto the adult company. Mandy Ainsworth ran a trial Summer Theatre School and this took off. The school holiday sessions continue to grow with focus on skills through mime, improvisation, projection, drama games and activities. This summer will see small groups perform to their parents.

Members of the Youth Theatre also support the theatre school by passing on their experiences. Mandy says: *“Young people have joined our productions planned for this year including: ‘The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime’ and ‘Goodnight Mr Tom’. All elements of our company will come together for ‘Scrooge The Musical’, our Christmas show in January 2025.”*

A model approach to encouraging youths into tech



Deputy Stage Manager Dan Grey, age 14, was appointed for the last show *Oliver!*

Dan is the second of two youngsters taken from operating the spotlight through to stage manager. It was done through mentoring from Mayhems’ Stage Manager, Richard Ellis, and a policy of increasing responsibility until the youngsters are ready to stage manage a show.

The first of these youngsters, Milo Kent, eventually stage managed *Our House for Mayhem* and is now studying Stage Sound Management at Liverpool University.

Dan brings a friend, Henry to help, whose triplet sisters help him set up the stage and run the spotlight. They are members of Mayhem Jrs and make a formidable team.

Up in the lighting booth, lighting man, Paul Macer-Wright, uses his neighbours 14-year-old son, Charlie, to help programme and operate lighting and chairman’s daughter, Alice, operates the other spotlight.

So you can see we are trying to bring youngsters on with stage craft not just acting – it works really well.

You have just got to trust them!

Lord of the Flies

noda youth London



All photo credit - Rosalind White Photography

First published in 1954, *Lord of the Flies* is a haunting tale where innocence is lost and primal instincts are unleashed. Fear, desperation and the darkness within human nature intertwine, painting a harrowing portrait of societal breakdown. Nigel Williams, adapted the classic book for the stage, which was debuted by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1995.

Choosing to put on *Lord of the Flies* was a no-brainer for me. It is one of those stories that everyone has a nodding acquaintance with, but experiencing it live is a whole different beast (pun very much intended). It digs into power, society and the wild side we all try to keep in check. While the original text centres solely around boys, we chose

to cast a mixture of boys and girls in order to allow for a richer examination of how different individuals, regardless of gender, navigate the challenges of survival, leadership and mortality.

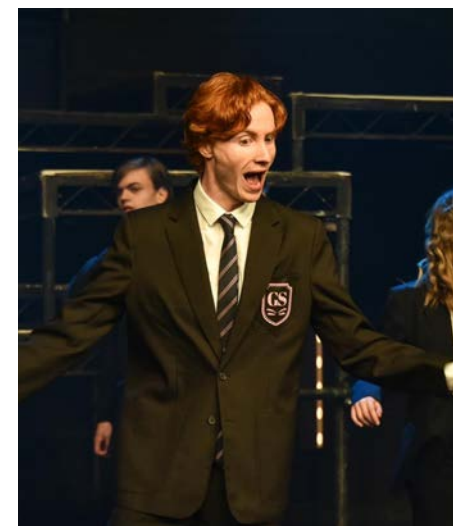
We opted for a minimalist and stark industrial aesthetic for our production. Chains and ropes were repurposed to symbolise vines, while piping doubled as spears. Rather than a literal interpretation of a jungle, our set consisted of steel decking at various organic angles and heights, allowing lighting and sound to assume pivotal roles in portraying the island, effectively transforming them into dynamic characters rather than mere backdrop elements.

The plot and themes explored in *Lord of the Flies* are relatively dark, particularly for a youth cast to tackle. We worked hard throughout the rehearsal process to find personal connections to their character's personalities and relationships rather than actions, as luckily none of our cast had been marooned on an island! We also dedicated time exploring the nuanced shifts in personalities and emotions as the plot unfolds - something we particularly focussed on in an emotion-led pre-performance warm up, which centred on guiding the cast through emotional exploration and character development exercises.

I'm incredibly grateful to everyone who helped bring *Lord of the Flies* to life: the cast for their unwavering passion, dedication and commitment - they all have very promising futures!; my fellow production team members for their expertise, creativity and tireless efforts and, of course, the audience for being a vital part of our journey.

Here's to the power of storytelling through theatre to unite and inspire us all. This is an experience I'm extremely proud of which will stay with me forever.

Cam Wilson (Director)



Why is youth theatre important?

noda youth South East



I have been asked to write an article about why youth theatre is important. My immediate response, when I first began to jot down ideas, was simply well, because it is. Many of the people who work in theatre will tell you that they do so despite the instability, lack of guaranteed work and often low pay. They will tell you simply that they do it for love. In a world where the success of a theatrical production is often measured against its commercial success, companies who do it for love seem more important than ever. Kenley Holiday Workshop (KHW), run by my Grandma, Sally Dallosso, is one such company.

KHW's first show was called *Music and Dance through the Ages*, performed in 1989, at All Saints' Church in Kenley. Seven years later, they first performed at The Barn Theatre with *The Boyfriend*, and have performed a show there every year since bar 2020, winning several NODA awards along the way. In 2023, 34 years after KHW was created, they hired a car with a hydraulic lift for their ambitious production of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. In those 34 years, what has kept the company going is the persistence of its

directors, performers, parents, crew and supporters, including, of course, NODA. The vast majority of the crew once belonged to the company as a performer until they turned 18; every summer I am struck by their dedication and commitment as they return for KHW's fortnight of rehearsals and performances to support the company, many of them giving up their only holiday to be there. What is it that draws these people back year after year? Love, for one thing, although if you were to pose this question on hour seven of the tech run, I'm willing to bet the word love wouldn't crop up quite so freely. It is something greater. A sense of duty, of loyalty to a company which saw them grow up.

And KHW most certainly saw me grow up. I first appeared at eighteen months old in their 2003 production of *Carousel*, when I famously ran offstage crying the moment I stepped out of the wings. After that, my family attended every year as audience members until I miraculously, and to everyone's surprise, returned to the stage nine years later in *Hello, Dolly!* I continued to perform every year until I turned 18, after which I assisted the director for

three years. For a two-week holiday workshop, KHW has had a remarkable impact upon my life: it has built my confidence, given me relevant industry experience and brought me many of my closest friends. I met Zoe on my very first day of rehearsals in 2012, and remember thinking she was far too cool to want to be friends with me. I still think she's incredibly cool, but now am lucky to call her one of my best friends. Eight months ago, I followed my Grandma's lead and established Itchy Feet Theatre, my very own company. Zoe played one of the leading roles in my first production.

And this is what theatre does, especially for young people. It builds bridges, connections, relationships based on shared experiences and common interests. When a young person joins a youth theatre company, they meet a group of like-minded, creative and vibrant individuals. KHW, and many companies like it, create welcoming and safe environments for free-spirited children to be themselves and use their capacity for imagination in a productive way. I was lucky enough to experience this as a performer and as an assistant director, throughout my

theatre career so far, helping children engage with theatre has been the most rewarding part of working as a creative. Providing children with a dedicated space for self-expression and collaborative creation is essential, and can develop their confidence and self-assertion in ways that the mainstream education system often may not.

For me, this was certainly the case. My performing days are over, but my days in theatre are just beginning. My company is currently planning our second off-West End production, and we hope to continue producing and performing new work for as long as we possibly can. The eight months since I established Itchy Feet Theatre have been the most terrifying but joyful months of my life, because I have rediscovered the childlike wonder

for theatre which was first instilled in me by my Grandma and KHW. Writing, to me, is both cathartic and play. I write plays to interrogate the world while trying to make sense of it. I write for the stage because there is no other art form but theatre which, for both audience and performers, can so poignantly reflect who we are, who we have been and who we can be. Without KHW, I cannot say for certain that I would be where I am today as a person and as a creative. Without the example of my Grandma, who has worked tirelessly to provide young people with creative opportunities for longer than I have even been alive, I may not have had the confidence to set up a company and decide to brave a career in theatre.

We need more companies like KHW

and supportive organisations like NODA. We need companies which strive for subsistence over commerce, which prioritise community over capital and opportunity over profit. We need to keep showing children that the arts are a catalyst for change and development, both personally, interpersonally and culturally. Every year, my Grandma tells the children that KHW is a family; for me, this is both literal and figurative. And like most families, we bicker, we cry, we worry ourselves silly, but we all come back the next year to do it all over again. We are bound by our passion for theatre and inseparable because of it. That is what makes youth theatre, and KHW in particular, so special.

Jen Tucker

New Northwest Youth Coordinator hopes to bring Schools, Colleges and Youth Theatre together

NODA North West

Here in the Northwest, a new Youth Coordinator has started his role. David Wall, Head of Performing Arts at St John Rigby College in Wigan, has taken up the mantle of Northwest Youth Coordinator. With his experience in education, he is hoping to bring together the worlds of education and community theatre to enthuse more youth participation in the arts.

"Here in the Northwest, we have had an increase in schools and colleges wanting to join the NODA family. It is great to see education establishments not only valuing the arts internally but gaining this external link too. There is so much we can do together to enthuse young people to be part of the arts. Working as a team, we can make sure that the young people of the northwest get as many opportunities as they can," said David. *"It is so important to give credit to our young people who work on both*

curricular and extra-curricular activities within the arts sector. I also believe that for young people to hear a 'different voice' is good for them. As a college, we joined NODA some time ago. This was so the students could get their review and hear critique from another experienced voice. This allows them to improve even further but also be celebrated for what they are doing well. Yes, the awards are great, but the critique is greater. Sometimes as their teacher my voice becomes 'white noise'. This external voice allows them to hear either the same message, but from someone different, or to hear new critiques that I may not have noticed or picked up on. We have such an abundance of talent in our youth sections here in the Northwest and we need to nurture this and give them the representation they deserve."

David is hoping that he can use his experience in both education and

theatre to help build on the youth representation within NODA in the Northwest area. He has already started visiting various groups and shows and wants to become a visible presence. *"I want to support groups in whatever way they need. Advice, guidance, words of encouragement, supporting shows... it is so important that we can show young people of the great things they can achieve by being part of our wonderful world of theatre, music and the arts. Without our youth participation, we cannot grow our adult groups – these young people are our future... both in community theatre settings and in the professional performance world."*

David can be contacted at his NODA email address - david.wall@noda.org.uk

Practically perfect in every way



Preston College run a Foundation Course aimed at learners with Educational Health Care Plans and special educational needs. They have just recently put on a pantomime and were nominated for Best Youth Musical at the District Awards for their performance of *Mary Poppins*.

The course is run by Sara Hartigan and Jane Tudor who takes up the story: *"The cast of 'Mary Poppins Jr' was made up of students on Foundation Learning courses who have Educational Health Care Plans or are learners with Special Educational Needs. They develop academic, employability, communication and independence skills through the arts, and gain what will hopefully be a lifelong love of performing and the Arts."*

They continue to surprise and impress their audiences with their technical performance skills and abilities, and their commitment and enthusiasm are inspirational. Attending their shows is a reminder of the pure joy of performing and how transformative the performing arts can be on people's lives."



Dundee Gang Show



Somewhere in the world a Scout “Gang Show” is being produced every day of the year. Since the first “Gang” took a bow in 1932, this unique entertainment has throughout the world raised more than £5 million pounds for the movement. The creator, writer and producer of the “Gang Show” is Ralph Reader, C.B.E who for many years was a leading actor and theatrical producer in New York and London. He sacrificed a brilliant career in the theatre for an ideal and is known throughout the world as a Champion Of Youth.

Initially, the show did not have a title, but during a rehearsal break, Reader asked a cast member if everyone was ready, to which the response was “Aye, aye Skip, the gang’s all here”. When the Gang Show started in London in 1932, Reader organised the cast as a Scout Troop; an arrangement which persists only in a few shows now. Members of the first troop wanted an identifying feature, deciding on a red scarf or necker. The red scarf has become a worldwide symbol and, to distinguish shows, an insignia in gold thread with the initials GS in Reader’s handwriting shot through with the show’s name.

Gang Shows are entirely volunteer run and often feature a majority of work written by Scouting and Guiding members. Dundee Scout Gang Show

is a variety show of musical numbers and comedy sketches performed by a cast who are members of the Scout Association in the City of Dundee and assisted by almost 100 backstage helpers. Gang Shows will have members of all ages involved; however, the on-stage performers are often limited to current Youth Members (those being aged under 25 in most cases). A large number of other areas will have members of all ages, including backstage, technical, administration, management and other areas.

The shows are produced with the dual aims of providing a learning opportunity for young people in the performing arts, as well as contributing to the artistic and cultural growth of their local community.



The shows may be a simple affair in a local scout hall, but are often more involved and take place in a local theatre. A season may only run for a single weekend, but performance seasons lasting one or two weeks are common. Tickets to these shows are often available to the public and can be a useful tool to engage the local community in Scouting.

Back in 2022, 6 members were selected to represent Dundee Scout Gang Show in Gang Show 90 a UK Wide celebration of the 90th Anniversary of Scout & Guide Gang Shows. The show took place at the Eventim Apollo, London on 9th July 2022.



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.



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Did you know?

NODA was founded in 1899.

Has a 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

Training Suggestions



NSPCC Learning
learning.nspcc.org.uk

Online safeguarding training for volunteers, chaperones and trustees



MHFA England
mhfaengland.org

Mental health first aid training - in person and virtual training



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

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



125th Anniversary Celebration Weekend

27-29th September 2024

Crowne Plaza, Plymouth

noda

Be inspired by amateur theatre



This year, we celebrate our 125th anniversary! To mark the occasion we will be holding our celebration weekend at the Crowne Plaza, Plymouth from 27th-29th September 2024. Central to the weekend will be the Annual General Meeting and the inauguration of the new President, Graham Liverton.

After the AGM, there will be a black-tie gala dinner in the Mariner Suite, with a musical theatre cabaret and dancing into the night.

For those arriving on Friday evening, there will be a light buffet with plenty of time for catching up with friends from all over the UK.

The hotel is adjacent to the famous Hoe where Sir Francis Drake is supposed to have been playing bowls when the Spanish Armada was approaching, way back in 1588. It is a very short walk from the hotel on to the Hoe with its stunning views over Plymouth Sound, but you can get a perfectly good view from the hotel while eating your breakfast.



Prices

Package A - two persons sharing

Friday evening light meal, Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, gala dinner, glass of wine, live dance band & cabaret, private bar.

Two nights bed and breakfast.

£252.00 per person

Package B - two persons sharing

Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, gala dinner, glass of wine, live dance band & cabaret, private bar.

One night bed and breakfast.

£153.00 per person

Package C - single occupancy

Friday evening light meal, Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, gala dinner, glass of wine, live dance band & cabaret, private bar.

Two nights bed and breakfast.

£367.00 per person

Package D - single occupancy

Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, gala dinner, glass of wine, live dance band & cabaret, private bar.

One night bed and breakfast.

£213.00 per person

Package E

Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, gala dinner, glass of wine, live dance band & cabaret, private bar.

No accommodation provided.

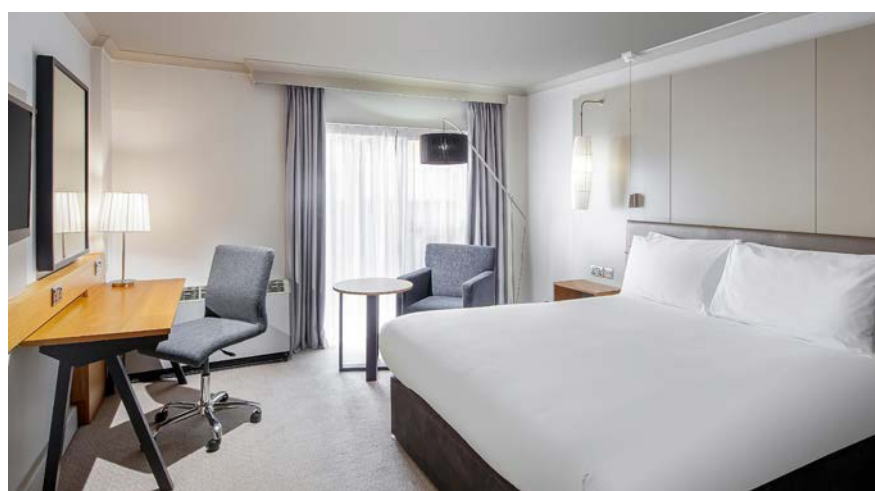
£78.00 per person

Package F

Gala dinner, glass of wine, live dance band & cabaret, private bar.

No accommodation provided.

£50.00 per person



NODA Presidential 125th Anniversary Gala & AGM 2024

Crowne Plaza Plymouth, Armada Way, Plymouth, PL1 2HJ

Friday 27th - Sunday 29th September

Please complete in block letters

Name(s)			
Address			
		Postcode	
Phone		NODA Region	
Email			

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

Package options

	A: to include 2 nights (Friday & Saturday) bed & breakfast, lunch and gala dinner Saturday £252pp. Two people sharing.
	B: to include 1 night (Saturday) bed and breakfast, lunch and gala dinner Saturday £153pp. Two people sharing.
	C: to include 2 nights (Friday & Saturday) bed & breakfast, lunch and gala dinner Saturday £367pp. Single occupancy.
	D: to include 1 night (Saturday) bed and breakfast, lunch and gala dinner Saturday £213pp. Single occupancy.
	E: AGM, light lunch Saturday, gala dinner £78 per person.
	F: Gala dinner only £50 per person.

There is no charge for attending just the AGM.

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

Payment

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

The latest date for application and payments is 1st September 2024.

Deposit

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

	Cheque made payable to NODA		Payment by BACS. Sort Code 60 - 83 - 01 Account 20379546 Quote GALA and your name		Card Payment - please call NODA HO once your booking has been confirmed - 01733 374 790
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Names of other members of your party or seating preference

Disability considerations

You can complete this form on our website noda.org.uk/gala



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All aboard with Sophie

Sophie Golby (24) is living her best life as an entertainment host at Disney Cruise Line. She is sailing the seas on the beautiful Disney Dream, captained by Mickey Mouse, and meeting people from all around the world.

This is a long way from Altofts in West Yorkshire where Sophie started performing with Normanton Musical Theatre Society taking the lead role in their production of *Annie*. Sophie worked with other local theatre companies including Wakefield West Riding TC where she took the role of Wendy in *Peter Pan*, performing at the Wakefield Theatre Royal and Opera House, whilst studying at Mechanics Performing Arts at Wakefield College. She also attended the NODA North East Youth Event in 2017. Sophie is a graduate of the London College of Music (Actor Musicianship) and has an MA from Rose Bruford College. A talented singer/songwriter, Sophie took time to chat with Jo Sykes, Youth Co-ordinator, NODA North East, just before she started her second contract with Disney.

When did you realise that you wanted to make performing your career?

I think I've always wanted to perform - I remember being maybe 4 or 5 years old and singing nursery rhymes for my family, choreographing dance routines with my friends at school and even re-enacting fairy tales with my sister and my grandma. I guess I must have decided it was something I wanted to pursue seriously when I was around 14, when I picked music and drama for my GCSEs. I knew I wanted to go to theatre school for higher education, but I don't think I truly believed it was a possibility until I started training at Mechanics in 2016. The tutors there empowered me to be the best that I could be, instilled a disciplined work ethic in me and truly helped me to believe that I could achieve my dreams. It's all thanks to the tutors at Mechanics that I was able to audition for prestigious drama schools in London, continue my training at London College of Music and subsequently at Rose Bruford. It's always been my dream

to perform, but the staff at Mechanics really helped me to believe I could make it a reality.

What was the highlight of your time with local amateur societies?

I have so many happy memories of my time performing with various societies across West Yorkshire. A real highlight was of course *Annie*, when I was a little girl, squawking out 'Tomorrow' and 'Maybe' with a real-life dog on stage. I still have the Sandy teddy bear that the director gave me as a well-done gift. Another highlight has to be Wendy in *Peter Pan*, when I flew around Wakefield Theatre Royal, as this was my last performance in Wakefield before I moved to university. I also loved performing as Audrey in *Little Shop of Horrors*, and of course performing as Cosette in *Les Misérables* on my 16th birthday, at Cleckheaton Town Hall with Acorn Youth Theatre Company. I look back fondly on my time performing with various amateur societies. I made friends that I still speak to regularly. Being surrounded by and working with wonderful performers of all ages provided me with a solid technical basis to build on when I furthered my training at university.

Can you tell us something of the process you undertook to secure the job with Disney Cruise Line?

I actually saw the job advertisement on Facebook, through a company called Excellent Recruitment. I filled in the application form back in February 2023, pressed complete, and thought nothing more of it. I was applying and auditioning for lots of stuff and regularly applied for things and didn't hear back, so I almost expected not to hear anything for a while. In May, I received an email inviting me



to a first-round interview, in which I had to prepare a short script and answer some questions. It was also a chance for me to ask questions about the job role and responsibilities. I was successful so was invited to a recall audition in London. There was a group of around fourteen of us, and each person had to perform two pieces of script and a dance routine that we had been taught. We then had an individual interview with a senior team member from Disney Cruise Line. The recall day was a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the company, to meet other performers and to learn all about life at sea. A day or so later, I received an email to let me know that I had been successful, and from that moment we started the onboarding process - there were visa applications and appointments, medical exams, safety classes and various other bits and bobs to complete. Then before I knew it, I was packing my case, hugging my family goodbye and boarding a coach to take me to the ship!

What has been the most exciting thing to happen during your time on Disney Dream?

I'd say getting to host the Sailing Away Deck show as that was a particularly exciting day. It took lots of hard work and rehearsals, but I was so pleased and proud when I opened the show and welcomed all of the guests on their Disney Dream vacation! Also, celebrating Christmas and New Year

on the ship was particularly special. We had a wonderful New Year's Eve celebration on the ship and the entertainment team were all involved in the evening. I was lucky enough to host the early evening family countdown in the atrium lobby, which was a serious pinch me moment. Counting down to 2024, with an atrium full of people was such an amazing experience, one which I will never, ever forget. There's also been so many amazing ports we've visited, one of my favourites was Tortola, in the British Virgin Islands. We did a zip wire experience through the treetops of the island and we could see the ship from up in the mountains. I still can't quite believe that I get to sail the seas, see the world and do something I love all at the same time.

Do you have any advice for young people in NODA societies keen to pursue a career in the performing arts?

The biggest piece of advice I can give is to listen and learn from those around you. Be kind, courteous and someone that everyone wants to work with. Talent goes a long way, but being a good person is what people remember most. Work hard, learn your lines and chat to everybody. Everyone involved in theatre has a story, and we can learn so much from those who have been involved in societies over the years. Take every opportunity you can and soak up all the advice and guidance you are given along the way. Oh, and always be punctual - *"Early is on time and on time is late!"*

Everyone in NODA North East wishes Sophie all the very best in her future career, be it on land or sea.

Jo Sykes
NODA North East
Youth Co-ordinator



CRUSTY, DUSTY & MUST-SEE!



AGATHA CRUSTY MURDER MYSTERY COMEDIES

There are now five Agatha Christie murder mystery comedies and between them they have notched up hundreds of productions worldwide – delighting audiences and theatre groups alike. So, if you want to make a killing at the box office, check them out now!

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the Medieval Murders



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The story of Dusty Springfield
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THE LADY VANISHES

Comedy thriller stage version of
the classic Hitchcock film

From the original novel on which the classic Hitchcock film was based, this stage adaptation offers many great character parts, with terrific opportunities for some 1930's extravaganza. It's a thriller with some lovely comic moments that's been a massive hit. 6m, 9f, 2m/f : doubling possible

THE INVISIBLE MAN

Hilarious, fast-moving adaptation
of the HG Wells' classic story

Just three actors play 15 parts in this wonderful adaptation which earned four and five star reviews at London's Jack Studio theatre. And did a sell-out week at the Edinburgh Fringe 2023 followed by a 30+ performance tour!



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NODApics

A few of our member
submissions
to our
Instagram page



Phantom of the Opera
Shoreline Productions



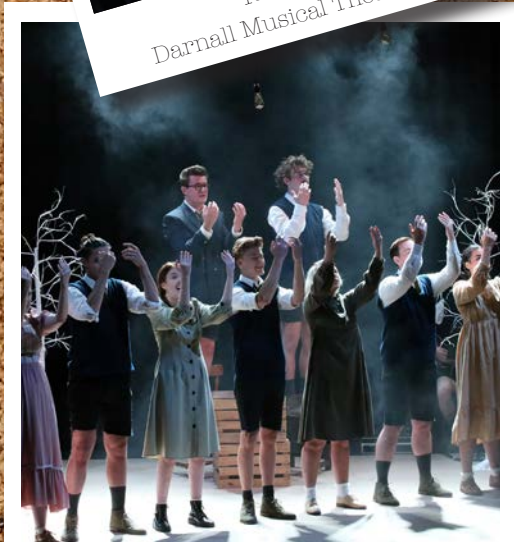
Fame
Cygnet Players



The Wizard of Oz
Darnall Musical Theatre Company



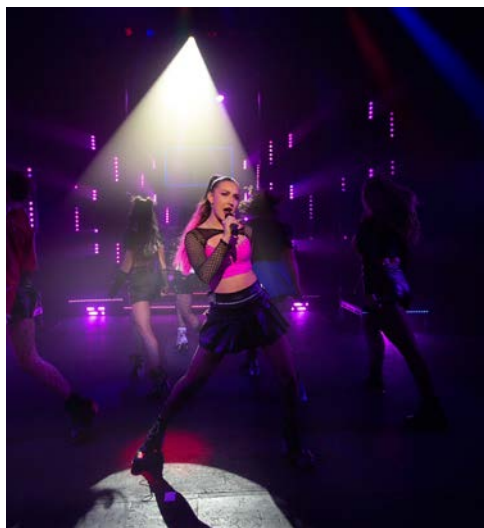
The Railway Children
Eldorado Musical Productions



Spring Awakening
Dynamik Theatre



Hunchback of Notre Dame
Little Theatre Company



Six: Teen Edition
Splinters Theatre Group



Legally Blonde
Brentwood Musical Theatre Society



The Wedding Singer
Pied Pipers



Little Shop of Horrors
The Angles Theatre



en
ctions



Les Misérables
Stage One Youth Theatre

Get in on the act!

Submit your show
pics on our website



Celebrating 90 years!

NODA London



Annie Get Your Gun 1964

Back in the 1930s, where, in the pre-television era, family entertainment was self-made, two neighbouring families in Hillingdon – the Hartstones and the Frankens – began meeting every Friday night for ‘music night’. At one such evening Joan Hartstone took her young man, Haydn Crocker, where he met Dan Franken and together, they decided to extend the group and form a Glee Club. With the growth of this new group it became the North Hillingdon Musical Society and on 7th December 1934, with Dan and Haydn at the helm, the society performed their very first show at All Saints Hall on Long Lane. It was simply called *Musical Comedy Show*. It was a great success and that night The Hillingdon Musical Society’s long and illustrious history began. The first full length show was *Desert Song* in 1935, which when reviewed, revealed ‘never before has a local society afforded us so much cause for satisfaction and enjoyment and so little cause for criticism.’ The following year was *Rose Marie* and yet another glowing reviewing naming it *Rose Marie without a thorn*. And so, a very high benchmark indeed had been set!

Since those early heydays in All Saints Hall, the society has continued to go from strength to strength and, with the

exception of the war years and Covid in 2021, members have performed in one, two or occasionally three shows each year. Over time the society became purely known as The Hillingdon Musical Society and recently known to most as HMS. So much has been achieved by our society bringing high quality drama and musical theatre to audiences at a number of theatres in West London over the last 90 years, and we have worked hard to continue the good work of our predecessors and develop the society with a wide and challenging repertoire, including classics, more recently written shows, and glittering cabarets.

Throughout its impressive history,

HMS has been proud to welcome members of all ages where they are encouraged and given opportunities to perform. We are proud to have so many younger members and feel this gives our society a unique energy and approach. These members, in time, become the heart of the adult chorus. The centrepiece of our youth work in our more recent history has been the Kenny Frier Youth Theatre and also HMS’ Annual Summer Project where about 100 children between the ages of 4 and 16 come together for a week in the summer to learn songs, script and routines before performing a show at the end of the week. The show is cast and put together in four days, which is an impressive feat for such young performers! They are aided by members of the adult society and a regular production team which helps to foster the HMS family feeling we are so proud of. This addition to the HMS offering over the last two decades has ensured longevity of the society especially in challenging times, and many of our summer project youngsters are now our leading men and women or are working in the entertainment industry!

As we move forward we continue to tread new boards and try to think out



Carousel 1980

of the box by, venturing out to produce some less well known shows (*Sunshine on Leith*, 2016 and *Whistle Down the Wind*, 2018); writing original scripts (*Alfie*, 2019 and *Musicals Behaving Badly*, 2022); performing in unusual venues (*Sister Act*-2023) and even serving our local community (through food and PPE deliveries) when COVID made us stay in with our *HMS Helps Hillingdon Initiative*.

Picking ourselves up after Covid-19 was, of course, as with all societies, a real battle, but here we are in 2024, back at The Winston Churchill Theatre, winning awards and rave reviews from NODA, providing a wonderful space for our members and families to share our love of musical theatre and entertaining audiences of all ages from the wider Hillingdon Community.

This is the legacy we are all proud of and as we reach this 90th Anniversary milestone, we are all excited about what the year will bring with our shows and celebrations. Plus, we are already planning the magic we can bring to local theatre over the next ten years too.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our loyal members and supporters, some of whom have been with the society for decades and others have family connections which go back to its inception. The Hillingdon Musical Society has only continued in strength, character and optimism because of you, and we are sure with your continued support the society will be there for the people of Hillingdon for many, many years to come.

Ali Whittall
HMS Chairman and
All the HMS Committee 2024



Crazy For You 2015



Little Mermaid 2023



Les Miserables 2015

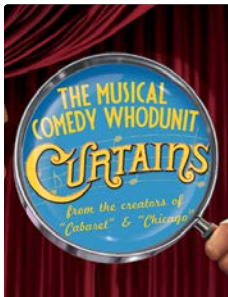
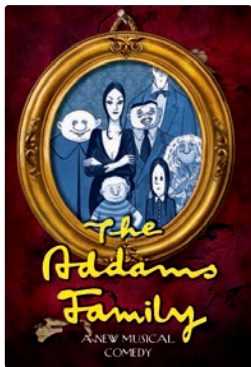


Annie 2013

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Theatre Summer School

Saturday 3rd - Friday 10th August 2024

Yarnfield Park, Stone, Staffordshire

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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.

During the week you will:

- Look at how choosing a show and casting can be done inclusively and in a way that sets firm foundations for success.
- Practically work with rehearsal and staging techniques to develop a toolbox of ideas and approaches when preparing productions for an audience.
- Find ways to better understand the needs of individuals and your society and how to best promote wellbeing and enjoyment for everyone.
- Explore strategies to allow your company members to shine from every department, not just those on stage.

It takes a village to raise a show. So get involved and develop your existing knowledge and refresh, or learn something new, in this exciting week of challenging tradition with an open mind and generous heart. It is relevant to directors, committee members, performers, workshop leaders in short anyone who has influence in the way a society runs.

Peaked your interest? Book today on our website to secure your place.



Find out the latest available classes and more information on our website

noda.org.uk/summerschool

A Wife for All Reasons

NODA South West



Original Play on Henry VIII's Wives by one NODA Group, revived by another in Sherbourne!

In November 2022, NODA South West Regional Councillor, Graham Liverton, made his first visit to The APS Sherborne Studio Theatre. On leaving, he told the group he had seen a production of an original play performed in the Oak Room of Torrington Town Hall, and felt that it would be ideal for performance in the intimacy of the APS theatre. He put Adrian Harding in touch with Stephanie Easton (Stef) - co-founder of the Torrington Players - and so began a correspondence, which culminated in a successful revival. The play won a NODA Certificate of Excellence for Original Writing when performed by them in 2019.

A Wife for All Reasons - echoing *A Man for All Seasons* - describes the turmoil at the court of Henry VIII, but sidesteps the convoluted politicking of More, Cranmer, Cromwell and Wolsey. Instead, it tells of life, love, deceit and betrayal entirely from the point of view of Henry's wives. Perhaps, surprisingly, they tell of their continuing love of and loyalty to Henry, despite the cruelty that they endure at the hands of this mercurial and eventually odious man,

as well as some insights into their reasons for continuing to do so.

The play follows a familiar chronology. Six wives, six queens: 'Divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived'. We never see the King, nor the politicians who manipulated the queens around the chess-board. This time, the normally silent ladies get to speak, uninterrupted. This is the heart of the story, constructing the play to enter the psyche of each queen and reveal their innermost emotions. Seven, cleverly-selected, diverse poems intersperse the different accounts and resonate as the 'spoken soul' of each queen. Most were written long after Tudor times, but nevertheless they evoke the essence of what these queens, resigned to their

fates, actually felt at the time.

After a play reading, in June 2023, the society knew at the end of the evening that *A Wife For All Reasons* could work brilliantly at Sherborne - and so it proved. Three shows became seven, and advance ticket sales were strong. Director, Adrian Harding, designed and built a gem of a set in black and dusty red, with wood panelling, a throne and a bench. And on the floor, a chess-board for the queens.

A quirky, unusual choice for APS, championed from first to last by Adrian - but by universal acclamation 'A hit! A very palpable hit!'

Adrian Harding, Robert Brydges and Matthew Heaton



Crowd-pleasing adaptations

now available to perform

It's a Wonderful Life

adapted by Mary Elliott Nelson

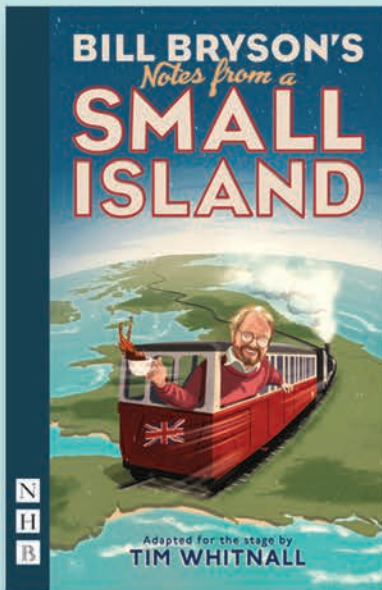
Cast: 4 actors, doubling; large cast possible

Christmas Eve, 1946. Down-on-his-luck banker George Bailey feels life has passed him by. But when his guardian angel pays him a visit, he's amazed to discover what life in his beloved town would be like without him.

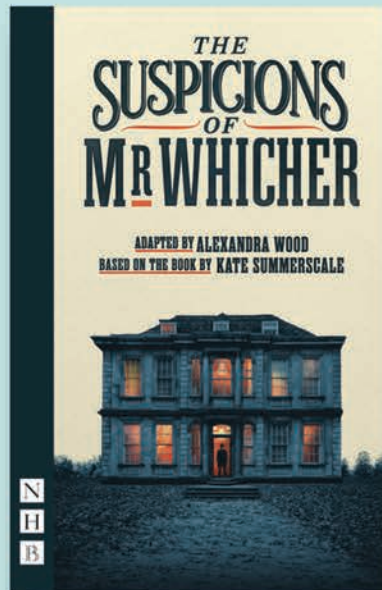
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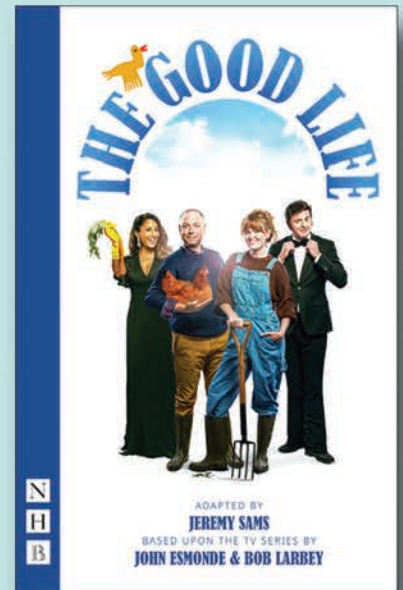
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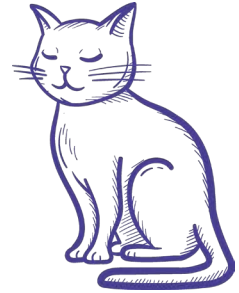
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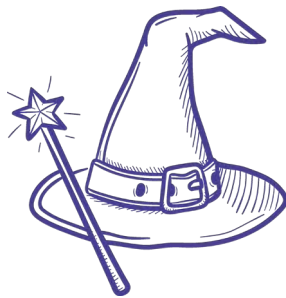
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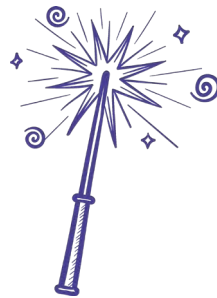
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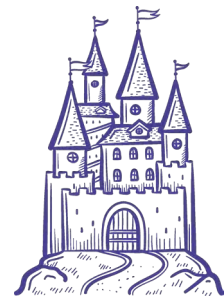
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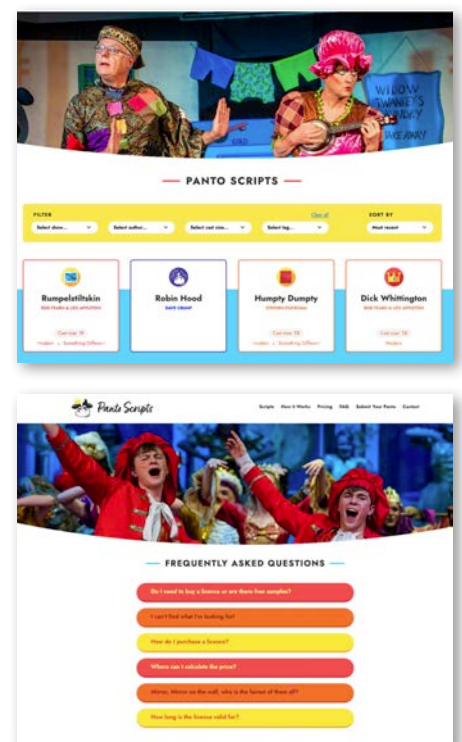
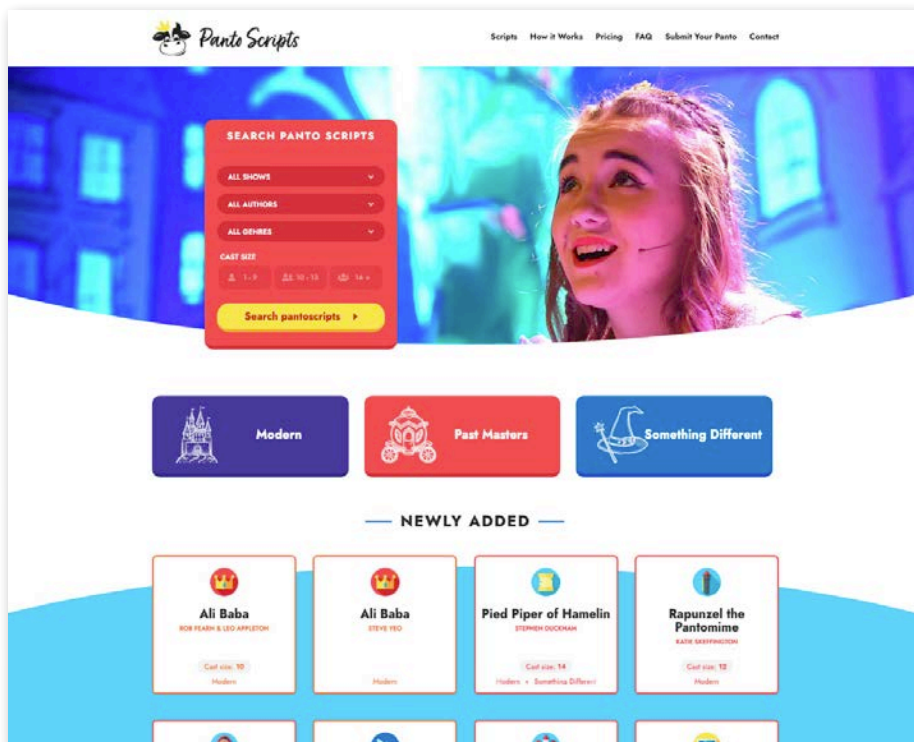


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Stephen Duckham
Long & Rawnsley
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Colin Barrow
Dave Crump

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Rob Fearn & Leo Appleton
Clarke & Clarke
Colin Barrow
Tom Pieman

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Stephen Duckham
Ron Hall
Long & Rawnsley

Goody Two Shoes

Colin Barrow

Hansel & Gretel

Ron Hall
Helen Gard

Hercules

Clarke & Clarke

Humpty Dumpty

Stephen Duckham
Ron Hall

Jack & The Beanstalk

Bradford & Webster
Peter Denyer
Stephen Duckham
Ron Hall
Long & Rawnsley
Peter Long
Rob Fearn & Leo Appleton
Dave Crump
Colin Barrow

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Ron Hall
Rob Fearn & Leo Appleton

Little Mermaid

Ron Hall
Colin Barrow

Little Red Riding Hood

Ron Hall
Long & Rawnsley

Mother Goose

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Stephen Duckham
Ron Hall
Long & Rawnsley
Colin Barrow
Helen Gard

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Ron Hall

Pied Piper of Hamelin

Stephen Duckham
Ron Hall
Long & Rawnsley

Pinocchio

Long & Rawnsley
Stephen Duckham
David Swan

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Leonard Caddy
Stephen Duckham
Long & Rawnsley
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Colin Barrow

Queen of Hearts

Robert Marlowe

Rapunzel

Bradford & Webster
Katie Skeffington
Amanda Craib
Helen Gard

Red

Gillian Coley & Julie Salmon

Red Riding Hood

Stephen Duckham
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Red Riding Hood and the Three Little Pigs

Dave Crump

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Stephen Duckham
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Dave Crump
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Rob Fearn & Leo Appleton

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Colin Barrow

Scrooge The Pantomime

Dave Crump
Trevor Wakefield

Sherlock Holmes and the Hound of the Basketcases - The Panto

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Sinbad the Sailor

Bradford & Webster
Peter Denyer
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My First Panto

NODA North East



Pantomime is often a child's first introduction to live theatre. With its bright colours, audience participation and fun sentiment is there any wonder that audiences, both young and old, love panto? In NODA North East we are lucky to have had a vast array of pantos taking place - indeed our regional councillor has been to over 20 pantomimes this season. I thought it would be fun to hear from those involved in panto for their first time and asked them to tell us about their experiences. We were delighted to receive feedback from across the districts.

In District 6, Lauren Daly, joined the cast of Robin Hood with Manor Operatic Society, and by performing over the very busy Christmas and New Year period, she danced on the huge Sheffield City Hall stage in front of around 30,000 people. Lauren told us "Being part of the panto for the first time was amazing. I loved everything about it.

I really enjoyed the thrill of performing in front of sell out audiences at every show. Everyone at Manor is so lovely and supportive. I really do feel part of the Manor family."

In District 7, Jakob aged just five, performed in his first panto with Normanton Musical Theatre Society. He told us: "My first pantomime was Hansel & Gretel. I hope I can do some talking in my next one as I like the bits where everyone talks. I did like that I had a solo in 'Lost in the Woods' and everyone lifted me up. I made lots of friends and got to go on stage with mummy too. I loved the finale (Oo I can say that word now), I am one billion (the biggest number ever) excited for my next pantomime."

St Giles with St Mary's Pantomime Theatre Society performed Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Isla, aged 5, is no stranger to pantomime because her grandparents, aunt and uncle are all involved. She was excited

to join as a Sunbeam (just as her mum had done years before) and to be onstage with her big brother, Dylan and cousin, Seth. She told us that she enjoyed dancing, getting dressed up and making lots of friends. Sophia was also performing for the first time with St Giles and said: "It was great to meet new friends, learn songs and dances". She had great fun during her first panto and can't wait to be involved in more shows in the future.

In District 13, Horbury Pageant Players (HPP) welcomed new members to join them for their February production of Cinderella. Louis (8) explained that she loved being involved for the acting and singing. This was shared by Jessie (7) who also like being a mouse, Fauna (8) enjoyed making new friends and being able to act on stage. For Autumn (11) it was her love of Performing Arts and because she felt being on stage was a great way to express her emotions that made panto so enjoyable. Myla



(9) liked the fact that she had the opportunity to meet new people and Alex (6) really enjoyed the fun of rehearsals and the fact that he was dressed as a soldier to take one of the Ugly Sisters off stage. Matilda (13) and Hannah (11), for whom it was also their first time performing with HPP, had the honour of leading on Cinderella's carriage as the elegant white horses.

Isaac (14) joined Snaith and Cowick Drama Group for their January production of *Sleeping Beauty* and said: *"I have had a really good time so far and in the last show I did the lights on the tech desk at the back. This has been an amazing experience for me and everyone has been very kind and welcoming so I can't wait to work on the next show. This group has been a really good experience for me and I would recommend it to anyone interested in drama."*

I do think my favourite quote of the



season comes from a member of Manor Operatic Society who, having reached the age of 17, is now no longer one of the Junior Members. He told us: *"I miss having a chaperone – they always knew where my costumes were and where I should be."*

Having read all these lovely comments

we think it's safe to say that we won't be short of panto lovers in NODA North East in the future and of course it's only possible because of the hardworking adults who comply with the Child Protection and licensing arrangements as well as the production teams who work hard to support the youngsters.

Panto for all

NODA North



Credit - One Imagery

Five years ago our group took the decision to provide a relaxed performance of our pantomime. To do this we made contact with Relaxed Performances #Theatre4all to ask their advice as to how we could make a performance more accessible.

NODA Today - Spring 2024

It doesn't take a lot of planning, in the main:

- Keep the houselights on low during the performance
- Keep the noise and sound levels low – no loud bangs or flashes
- Provide a quiet area where people can take some time out away from the performance area
- Keep the cast on stage (no one in the auditorium)
- Our cast introduce themselves and their characters before we start
- Audience members are allowed to move about freely during the performance.

We have been fortunate to obtain grant funding to cover the cost of the one night performance which has enabled us to offer the tickets free of charge making it even more accessible. The uptake was low for our first year but

when we reinstated it after lockdown our attendance numbers have been increasing year on year. This year we offered the opportunity to have photos taken with the cast after the show and this was very popular.

The messages of gratitude from parents and carers make it all worthwhile, the overarching feedback being it was so good being able to relax and not having to worry about their children shouting out, asking questions or moving around.

A few changes and a little bit of extra thought can make theatre accessible for more people – as it should be.

Michelle Coulson
Trustee, Dryburn Theatrical Workshop

An interview with Sue and Andrew Sheppard

NODA North East



In January 2023, Encore Theatre Company produced their annual panto *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* which had been written by their Treasurer, Sue Sheppard.

Sue made such a good job of writing this that her society asked if she could write another one for their 2024 production. Without hesitation, Sue started writing, this time engaging her husband, Andrew. Both of them set to the task and before they knew it *Robin Hood and The Babes in The Wood* was born.

I was honoured to be invited once again to see their production and it was excellent, the whole audience providing lots of boos, hisses, laughter and applause much to the delight of the entire cast.

An excerpt from the NODA review for this panto reads:

This was the first pantomime by Encore Theatre Company that I had attended but I had been reliably informed that they always produce a fantastic

family pantomime and this one was no exception.

It was almost like writer and Director, Sue Sheppard, had put a tick against a checklist on how to write the perfect pantomime as it had all the traditional elements - a hero, villains, romance, comedy, a giant, delightful dance routines, audience participation, trendy songs.

Due to the success of this panto, I asked Sue if I could interview her and her husband, here is the result:

Why did you want to try your hand at writing a panto?

I have been a member of our fabulous Encore Theatre Company for over 40 years and my husband, Andrew who is also a life member has written and directed our pantomime's before. I have always admired his hard work, creative passion and comedic timing he has shown in bringing life to the stage. When we were in need of a director for our upcoming panto, he said why don't you think about writing and directing a panto? You have

always had an input when I was writing, you know what works to make a good panto. I have always made-up stories for my children and now grandchildren and have a vivid imagination and brought my characters to life and felt this could be an opportunity for me to fulfil what I really wanted to do. Although I felt scared about putting myself forward, Andrew said he would help me and give me guidance so I knew I would be in safe hands. So, three years ago my journey began!

Why did you choose to do a panto rather than a play or musical?

I have always enjoyed being in panto and have played many character and comedic roles over the years. Panto gives you freedom to express your creative bent and bring your thoughts to life, and can also be good for members who aren't very confident to audition for parts yet, but can have lines, and hopefully give them encouragement to do so in the future. I try to make sure everyone has something to sing, say or dance. It's a great vehicle for our young members of Encore to perform, all children are different, some



love the limelight, some are quite happy just to be on the stage. I think panto is my forte, don't think I could do a musical, you never know about a play, will have to think about that one

What gave you the inspiration to write it?

What gave me inspiration, well firstly having Andrew by my side and knowing I could bounce off him, he's the one with all the daft corny jokes, he has a book of them! He writes with me and we can go change things if one of us thinks something we have written doesn't quite fit the storyline. Also Encore Theatre Company encourages and supports members, which is great and hopefully, now they have let me take the reins, it will encourage others to give it a go.

The children coming to see the panto give me inspiration, keeping up to date with what's popular. I am involved in choosing

all the music so asking members with young children what's popular with them, and the fact that you can hear them all singing over the principals when they know it makes me smile, that's inspiration itself.

Do you base the characters on anyone you know or a celebrity?

No I don't. I think when you are a member of a society and the writer of a panto, you will have a good idea of who will audition, but there is no better feeling when someone who you wouldn't think would audition comes into the room and is brilliant! You can work on the character when you have cast it.

How long did it take you to write it?

I think once you have finished a panto, you need a break before you start again. Writing pantos is hard work, we are fortunate to have a lovely caravan in the

countryside and whilst we are there we are relaxed and have time to think. For me it goes in stages, write a few scenes, think about production, think about the music etc, total about five months.

Are you writing anything at the moment?

No, we have just finished panto in January, but that's not to say when I hear some music and think, oh yes that would be a good song for the panto!

Do you have plans to write anything else?

I have nothing planned at the moment, as I am back in rehearsals for our next production, 'Oliver' which we will be performing in June this year.

Les Smith
NODA North East
Regional Councillor



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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.

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New badges recently added



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Home Grown Talent Produces a Giant of a Show!

NODA South West



Steph on stage Aladdin 1989



Steph in Mother Goose 1987

St Blazey AOS look locally to overcome a big problem!

The beginning of 2023, saw St Blazey AOS with a dilemma. Suddenly, through a set of circumstances beyond their control, they had no director or script. Their usual director and script writer was unable to do the show due to personal reasons and the society were unsure what they were going to do. They put out an appeal through the local media and all of their social media channels but were not able to secure somebody with the right level of skill

and experience for their needs. Things were getting desperate, and they were wondering whether they were going to be able to put on a show for 2024.

At one of their committee meetings somebody put forward a name they all knew, and they collectively agreed that it could work – they just had to make the person themselves believe it! The name was Steph Housman – a woman very much a part of amateur theatre in the town for most of her life, initially through her parents and latterly in her own right. Steph first joined the

society as principal boy in 1987, and had been in many other productions in the St Austell area since.

Steph was persuaded by those close to her that it would work. A number of scripts were perused and a script from NODA was selected – *Jack and the Beanstalk* by Dave Crump. Rehearsals started and the journey began!

The joy and success of this year's show has been shared by cast and audience alike. The show has had a great deal of praise from a number of sources including the NODA President and Vice-President – and performed to a number of sell out houses too!

Steph stated that she: genuinely doesn't know how it happened, but loved that everybody enjoyed it, and she wouldn't have swapped it for a fortnight in Barbados. Steph has already agreed to do next year's show, *Dick Whittington* and the society are looking forward to their next adventure!

Andy Gill
St Blazey AOS President



St Austell Mayor with company of *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Steph is pictured with other members of backstage crew – 2024. Credit – Sheila Gill

There are no 'limits'

NODA North

"What's next?" was the cry at St. Andrew's Operatic Society after our previously staged Gilbert & Sullivan of *Patience* in February 2023. The society usually does a fully costumed, staged (with orchestra) G&S in February, so members looked back over the years and discussed what hadn't been done for a few seasons. Nobody could have guessed what was in the mind of our director: *Utopia Ltd*. Had he gone mad? It's a failure! It's tired and wooden! It's very expensive to put on! Isn't it difficult to stage? There are too many principals for us to cast! No one wants to see it! Had any of us seen it performed before?

Did we know it? What's the music like? Isn't it too difficult, too long, too complicated? We had sung only one chorus before, 'Eagle High', and that was many years ago. Our director persuaded us that we could cast it, so – deep breath – and 'Yes'. We were up for the challenge. And what a challenge! We learnt not to limit ourselves to the usual repertoire of G&S, but instead dare to do something different. Somehow, we had to fit in two rehearsals at the same time, one for our annual Christmas Concert in St Andrew's Church, Roker, and the other for *Utopia Ltd*. Sunday evenings became very long and involved!

Critics of the original production of *Utopia Ltd* in 1893, were not happy; most agreeing that Gilbert was past his best and that the show was too long and rambling. Staging *Utopia Ltd* with its large cast and unwieldy libretto is a challenge for any society, so our production represented a significant reworking of the piece, in a way that Gilbert & Sullivan might have done had their working relationship been more harmonious. *Utopia Ltd*, as it stands, is a vast and sprawling opera, full of plotlines that start and then just

fizzle out without going anywhere. A certain amount of 'pruning' took place: characters and songs were cut and entire sub-plots abandoned, resulting in a neater, shorter, more compact and understandable show. One of the revisions being a role reversal of some of the characters; it was decided to have a Queen Paramount rather than a King, and a headmistress rather than a headmaster!

The original costumes for *Utopia Ltd* were extravagant and costly; no way could we attempt to replicate them. Another limit? Our director suggested evening wear, 'posh frocks' for the most part. And so, the ladies returned to their wardrobes and found the evening dress they hadn't worn for years, borrowed a sister's dress or their daughter's prom dress, and even for one lady, wearing her wedding dress again!

With creativity, flair and a bit of artistic licence, we also included a new song. Using some of Gilbert's unset (and rather superior) lyrics and a tune composed by Sullivan for the near contemporary 'Haddon Hall', a new song was included: 'From Yacht That Lay In Yonder Bay'. The orchestra was challenged – not many players, nor even our MD, had played or performed the music before. It was a new venture and another to add to their repertoire. However, we love having a full 17-piece orchestra – they make all the difference. Of course, they rose to the challenge and were just wonderful. Staging certain items became such fun, as one song ('Society Has Quite Forsaken All Her Wicked Ways') was sung while playing a game of musical chairs! The audience loved it. Adding occasional lines and bringing the libretto up-to-date was thoroughly appreciated with some of the biggest laughs when in Zara's final speech she

announced that *"there will be endless law suits, crowded jails, NHS waiting lists longer than life itself, interminable confusion in the army and navy..."*

Each evening was brilliant; the energy and commitment of everyone was tangible. The final reprise of the queen singing 'Society Has Quite Forsaken All Her Wicked Ways' with the full cast adding the chorus was stunning, all the cast dancing and having fun with a final "Yeah!" at the end, bringing the house down and sending everyone home with a spring in their step.

On our opening night we had the pleasure of Christine Hunter Hughes (NODA President) in the audience. She wrote afterwards: *"I just wanted to say a big thank you for inviting me to see your production of 'Utopia Limited' and for making me so very welcome. I certainly have not seen 'Utopia' for quite some time, in fact I think the last time I saw it I was in it, so I did not actually 'see' it at all. The evening was simply delightful, and I loved the 'amends', they were done so well. The whole evening was just a pure pleasure – what more can possibly be said?"*

And so, St Andrew's Operatic Society have now done all fourteen operas of Gilbert & Sullivan. How many other societies can boast this? Who else will perform *Utopia Ltd* this year? Could we be the only one?

Go on – challenge yourself with this wonderful opera. There are no 'limits'!

Gilly Beck (Honorary Secretary)

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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?

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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.

Noel Rigg one of NODA's longest serving NODA Regional Representatives

NODA North East



Noel Rigg joined Dewsbury Collegians at the age of 16, his parents were already heavily involved with this society, his dad being president for 12 years and was also NODA North East Regional Representative for the Bradford District.

Noel was a very loyal member of The

Collegians, being president on two occasions and Publicity Manager for 50 years.

Throughout this time, Noel was awarded both the 50-year Gold Bar and 60-year Diamond Bar, he had actually completed 66 years' service. In 1989, Noel was approached by Harold Freeman, who was at that time NODA North East Regional Representative for the Wakefield area, he was moving to Scarborough to take up the post in that area and asked Noel if he would be interested in taking over the Wakefield area, of course, Noel accepted without hesitation.

Noel was accepted as "stand-in rep" until he was officially installed at the NODA North East AGM in Bridlington in 1990.

During Noel's time as regional representative, he was made an Honorary Life Member of NODA and awarded the Life Member Medal which he always wore with great pride along with his other NODA Long Service Medals.

Noel retired from his position as regional rep at the NODA North East AGM on 23rd April 2023, due to health problems. Sadly Noel passed away on 10th August 2023, after a long illness. He had served 34 years as regional representative for NODA North East District 7.

Les Smith
NODA North East
Regional Councillor

NODA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of The National Operatic and Dramatic Association, Charity No 1171216 will take place on Saturday 28th September at 2.30pm at Crowne Plaza, Plymouth, PL1 2HJ.

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

To ensure the smooth running of the meeting, any resolutions to be considered at the meeting should be sent to the Chairman of Trustees, Mr Ian G. Cox, at 15 The Metro Centre, Peterborough, PE2 7UH or by email to ian.cox@noda.org.uk.

Who's who on NODA Council

President

Christine Hunter Hughes

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Regional Councillor - London

Pam Armstrong

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Regional Councillor - South West

Graham Liverton

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Chairman

Ian G. Cox

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Regional Councillor - North

Peter Oliver

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Regional Councillor - Wales & Ireland

Sharon Davies

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Immediate Past President

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Regional Councillor - North East

Leslie Smith

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Regional Councillor - West Midlands

Andy Brown

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Vice President

Graham Liverton

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Regional Councillor - North West

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Life Member

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Regional Councillor - East

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Regional Councillor - Scotland

Stuart McCue-Dick

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Life Member

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Regional Councillor - East Midlands

Jules Jones

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Regional Councillor - South East

Kay Rowan

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NODA Theatre Summer School

Jacquie Stedman

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Regional vacancies

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

NODA East Midlands

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NODA East Midlands

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NODA East Midlands

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NODA North

Regional Representative

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Regional Representative (Drama)

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NODA Wales & Ireland

Regional Treasurer

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NODA Wales & Ireland

Regional Representative

Cardiff and Valleys

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NODA West Midlands

Regional Editor

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Councillors' Chat

A quick note from your regional councillor



Tessa Davies - East Regional Councillor

The number of productions in the East is slowly building and it is great to see so many more in our diaries. The standard of productions continues to improve and many societies are presenting professional level productions on a regular basis. The East region AGM, Awards Lunch and Presentation is on 7th April, and we will be welcoming nominees to Trinity Park, Ipswich on that day. Unfortunately, as we had to move the venue to a smaller one, many societies have not been able to book places this year. However, the good news is that we have secured a larger venue at Trinity Park for next year, so we hope to be able to accomodate everyone who will want to attend.



Jules Jones - East Midlands Regional Councillor

It's a busy time in the East Midlands. We are getting ready for the AGM and Regional Day on Sunday 9th June. Watch out for the newsletter to see all the details. We are currently looking for reps and rep assistants to join the regional team so if you want to support amateur theatre in your district please get in touch. So many wonderful productions happening this season, don't forget to let us promote your show on Facebook and East Midlands section of the NODA website.



Pam Armstrong - London Regional Councillor

The Spring season is busy with a plethora of superb shows - musicals, dramas, pantos - being staged in our London Region and it is a delight to see that our region abounds with so much artistic and creative talent. It really is a joy for me to see many of your productions and I look forward to a busy time ahead.

Preparation is well in hand for our AGM and Celebration Day on Sunday 16th June 2024, at The Radlett Centre - watch this space!



Peter Oliver - North Regional Councillor

I hope everyone has settled following a great pantomime season, and what a time we all had (oh yes we did) . I loved the fact that some of our groups introduced relaxed performances opening up live theatre to all members of our community. Looking forward to 2024, as we plan for our annual Gala weekend at Scotch Corner from 5 to 7 July and I hope that you can come along to join in our celebrations, as well as planning for our next performance awards in October. A big thank you for the continued support and invitations to join you in your upcoming productions and I can't wait to see what is happening for the rest of the year.



Leslie Smith - North East Regional Councillor

It certainly has been a bumper packed year with lots of excellent productions going on around the NODA North East Region. I am very pleased to welcome some new members to the North East family, some are totally new to NODA, and some have returned to us after a short absence, welcome to you all. At our AGM in April, we said goodbye to two of our regional reps who have decided to stand down. Sally Holmes and Bryan Craven have both served on the regional committee for several years. I am sure you will join me in wishing them all the very best for the future, I am sure we will see them at many future productions.

Andy McNicholas - North West Regional Councillor

We had a fantastic turn out of nearly 2,500 members attending the various District Award Dinners over the past eight weeks. I've thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many of you and seeing so many familiar faces. The winners from each of the District Awards will now go forward to the Regional Awards Weekend on the 4th and 5th of May at the Blackpool Winter Gardens - with over 800 attending the weekend last year, this year is looking to be even busier based on the bookings coming in. I look forward to welcoming everyone back to Blackpool in May!



Stuart McCue-Dick - Scotland Regional Councillor

The NODA Scotland committee are busy working on 2 major events for 2024. The national training day, open to all NODA members aged 16 and over, will take place on Sunday 16th June in Perth covering singing, dance, movement and drama. To sign up for advance details please email liz.daniels@noda.org.uk Taking place from 25-27 October, this year's NODA Scotland conference will celebrate not only NODA's 125 anniversary but also 70 consecutive conferences at Peebles Hydro. It is hoped to launch full details in early April with bookings opening in May



Kay Rowan - South East Regional Councillor

Your regional reps have been out and about over the past few months seeing a wide range of productions. Youth groups are flourishing and both the Youth Coordinators and I have frequently joined the reps to support our youngsters - the future of amateur theatre and NODA in the South East. The Regional Editor has worked tirelessly to get articles written for this magazine. Do keep sharing your news and activities with the wider NODA family via the magazine.

I am looking forward to attending many of your productions in 2024.



Graham Liverton - South West Regional Councillor

We are coming to the end of pantomime season and what a season of great pantos that have given a great deal of pleasure, oh yes they have! Now we have spring on the way and societies are gearing up to put on some wonderful shows and I look forward to them - I am never disappointed, not only with your super shows but the warm welcome I always receive. I look forward to meeting up on our Award evening on May 18th, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Plymouth I wish everyone in the NODA Southwest family all the very best with full theatres and village halls !



Sharon Davies - Wales & Ireland Regional Councillor

When asked what I do, I explain what NODA stands for, and how we help amateur theatre. How refreshing last night, when visiting the Music Hall Theatre in Lanzarote whilst on holiday, and speaking to one of the artistes to be told that he knew all about NODA and how helpful the information NODA provides had helped him in the past. I sometimes wish that more societies would take time to have a quick look at the information we supply. Keep your invitations coming in to both your district rep and myself, and as early as possible, please we are starting to get busy and we love it.



Andy Brown - West Midlands Regional Councillor

We are pleased to be returning to Sutton Coldfield Town Hall on Sunday 14 April 2024, when we will be able to celebrate many wonderful achievements from last year. We previously stated we expected a sell-out. How true this proved to be as tickets flew out to members - selling out ahead of the closing date for bookings. I have welcomed invites to fabulous productions across the whole region and I look forward to many more equally superb shows over the coming months. As always 'Break a Leg' to all in NODA West Midlands.



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