

noda TODAY★

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most experienced professionals.

It was with great sadness to announce the passing of NODA Past President, Bert Lumsden, in June this year. Bert dedicated many years to our amazing pastime, and he will be sadly missed. Our thoughts are with his wife, Anne, in these difficult times.

NODA Today is a magazine for our members - reflecting your stories from across the regions. If you have a story to tell, please contact your regional representative, or your regional editor, and make your story heard!

Exciting times lie ahead for NODA, as we look forward to an innovative rebrand, including a new website with a vibrant fresh look. Keep an eye out on our social media on Friday 27th September! That same weekend also sees the inauguration of our incoming National President, Graham Liverton. Tickets are still available for the black tie gala in the beautiful setting of Plymouth Hoe.

Ian G. Cox
Chairman of Trustees

Welcome to the summer edition of NODA Today and we have finally seen some summer sun!

It is brilliant to see such creativity across the membership when producing live theatre - from converting unusual spaces into theatres and staging productions that would test even the

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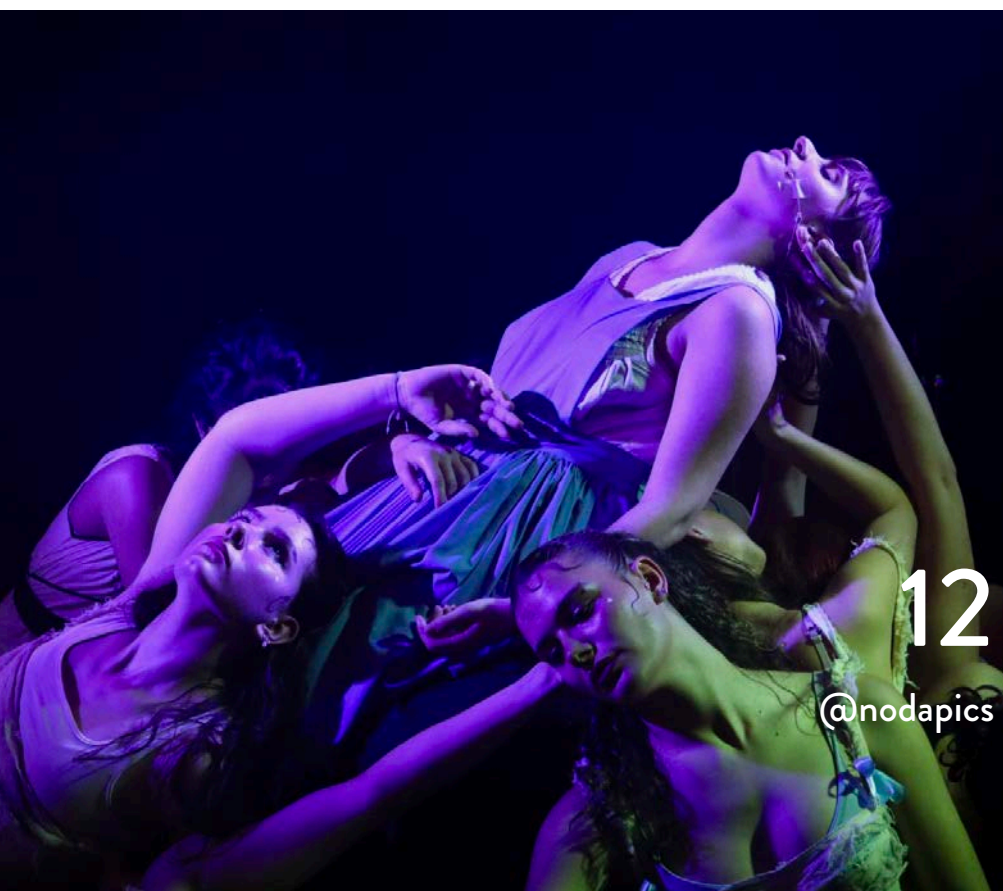
Robert T. Lumsden

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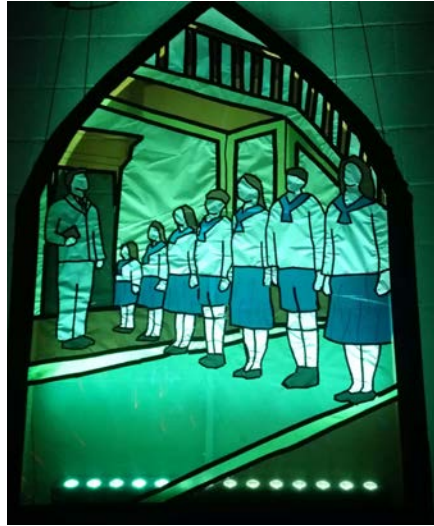
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All things pantomime



The *Sound of Music*'s walls came alive with mock stained-glass windows in St Neots

NODA East



Arguably the world's favourite musical, *The Sound of Music* is synonymous with songs from high on top of the Alps, mischievous children in matching sailor blouses and shirts and lots of singing nuns.

But a Spring 2024 production of the Rodgers and Hammerstein's classic, staged by VAMPS of St Neots, Cambridgeshire, presented audiences with a beautiful new dimension that they will likely remember for a long time. Through the clever artistry and handiwork of deputy stage manager and set designer Natt Rózańska, the large, but plain, performance hall at St Neots' Priory Centre, a former Benedictine monastery, recaptured vestiges of a place of worship: Rózańska crafted six mock 'stained glass' windows to hang high on the hall's side walls. Each colourfully depicted a different scene from the show, such as the novice Maria's joyous day in the hills, Captain von Trapp's military-style review of his children, nuns deep in prayer by candlelight and Maria entertaining the young von Trapps with

her guitar, to name a few.

Mock stained-glass windows emerged as a set design idea while Rózańska collaborated with Director Emma Driscoll, on fully engaging the audience with the show.

As the designer explains, *"We like to not just have the [show] design stop at the proscenium arch. We want to break into the auditorium, and into the foyer if we can so the whole thing is more of an immersive experience. As soon as you enter the building, you're 'there'; you know!"*

It came out so organically, really, an idea for the old abbey feel in the auditorium," Rózańska continues. When Director Driscoll agreed that she would like custom stained-glass windows for the show, Rózańska recalls, *"I was sweating. Then I slowly figured out, ok, custom windows, I have to design them."*

She designed the windows with a view as to how they would look on the hall's walls, with the lighting team involved

in early discussions so that Rózańska's creations *"could be designed in mind to light them on the wall"*, she says. To make the windows, Rózańska used frame arches, on which she stretched clear PVC *"like you would with a canvas"*, she explains. She then projected images of the designs she had created onto the frames and drew on the images. Coloured cellophane gels stood in for stained glass. Completing each window took between six and eight hours, which she did much of on her kitchen floor.

While she clearly has skill and talent in the visual arts, Rózańska enjoys putting her variety of capabilities and interests to work in theatre and keeps her options open for future theatrical paths. *"I'm always picking up different crafts and never really stick to or focus on one thing,"* she acknowledges. *"I like making things, creating stuff across all mediums. It's such a passion."*

DeeDee Doke - NODA East

Promenade Productions - 40 years on!

NODA South West



Pictures from the show *Sleeping Beauty* February 2024. Credit: Steve Meekums



(Above) Josephine Llewellyn as ANNA in first production of *The King and I* (1996) and (below) her daughter and granddaughter (Julia and Alice Glaudot) in the current panto production. Credit: Steve Meekums



15th February 1984, saw the birth of a Gloucestershire tradition and an anniversary celebration in 2024.

With the exception of the 'covid years', Promenade Productions have brought fun and laughter to the people of Gloucestershire each winter with a traditional family pantomime.

The first panto, *Sing a Song of Sixpence* was in 1986, with ticket prices in those far off days costing £2.00 to £3.00! In their anniversary year, *Sleeping Beauty* played to full houses, continuing the sell-out productions of last year's *Cinderella* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

The society continues to flourish with some of the original members still involved, even if not quite as active as they once were 40 years ago! John Pannett has, throughout the society's existence, been chairman – a position he combined with a variety of different roles from producing and directing, to his inimitable creation of pantomime dame.

There is however no shortage of up and coming talent. The choice of shows reflect this. Pantomime, still with the battle between good and bad, can only

be kept alive with current and local references. We are now seeing the third generation of the same family!

Apart from the excitement when the curtain rises on a new production and the months of rehearsals pay-off, there comes the feeling of being part of a team, a family. Promenade Productions have always fostered this feeling, offering support when members find themselves dealing with unexpected situations. It's not all about being 'on stage'.

Over the years, Promenade Productions have won a number of awards from NODA and the Gloucestershire Theatre Association.

Continuing the celebrations of this milestone in the society's history and recreating some nostalgic memories of the first musical *Oklahoma!* a barn dance was held attended by many old friends.

And in July, the curtain will rise on the summer musical, *High School Musical*.

Steve Meekums

Workshops return to NODA Scotland

NODA Scotland



NODA Scotland previously presented a series of annual amateur theatrical workshops in the central West of Scotland. These workshops proved to be a great success which brought like-minded people together, to develop and enhance essential performance skills required for amateur musical theatre, and hosted in an environment which was safe and where people could make new friends and learn new skills. This overall experience had not been forgotten and our membership recently expressed an interest in the recommencement of this.

The NODA Scotland committee fully supported this initiative with an overarching aim to give the opportunity for members of clubs, societies and individual members across Scotland, to develop their performance skills through the provision of local training.

NODA Scotland currently provides practical workshops at its annual conference and the intent was to replicate this high standard, as well as the standard provided at the annual NODA summer school. It was recognised that for various reasons, not everyone is able to travel to, or attend, these residential events. By offering local training at a central location, people could more easily take part from across Scotland.

The Scottish Committee formed a working group and developed a questionnaire which was circulated to the membership. This identified the things they would like to see and be involved in, at a training day, which would be relevant and inclusive. It was of no surprise that the most popular topics included vocal, drama and dance. Other themes were also identified such as management of societies, props, child protection and diversity and although these topics were not disregarded, it was recognised many are picked up through other channels.

The city of Perth was selected as the central location for our training day. We write this article as we reach the end of a very successful day held in Perth's North Inch Community Campus, which has all the spatial and technical resources required to meet musical theatre needs.

MTI were extremely accommodating, helpful and supportive. In working closely with them, we got permission to use rehearsal material from the *Young Frankenstein - West End* version as our focus for the training day. We engaged three highly talented and experienced tutors from across Scotland to lead each of the three workshops; Billy Muir, vocal music; Greg Robertson, dance and Ian Bustard, drama. Our tutors collaborated, and on the day,

we experienced some amazing outputs from the individual workshops and when we showcased them at the end of the day.

Our evaluation of the day has been very positive from the 50 delegates who attended. Initial feedback commends the tutors for sharing their skill, talent and support by getting the best from participants and challenging those who attended by taking them out of their comfort zone. Further feedback also indicated the day was well planned and well paced, with final words of expression including: "excellent", "fab-u-lous", "fulfilling", "amazing", "fantastic", "brilliant" and "enjoyable".

In recognition of the encouraging feedback received from this event, we have to build on this in the future.



Long-term volunteer receives honour

NODA Scotland



Robert Fyfe, honorary president of Runway Theatre Company, has received an Order of the British Empire Medal for services to the arts and to the community in the city.

Mr Fyfe retired this year after 40 years with Runway Theatre Company - with 27 of them as chairman and director.

Originally called the Glasgow Airport Drama Club, the amateur dramatics company, now based in Giffnock, East Renfrewshire, has been running for more than 50 years and performs traditional pantomimes as well as rare, new and lesser-known musicals.

Mr Fyfe said: "I am honoured to receive this award for my involvement in amateur theatre, particularly with Runway Theatre Company. It has been a joy over the years to combine my passion for the arts while helping to raise funds for causes close to my heart. This recognition reflects the collaborative efforts of a dedicated community of volunteers."



Magna and Young Magna Performing Arts celebrate 45-years

NODA West Midlands



Alongside NODA we are celebrating an anniversary this year. Ours is the forty fifth anniversary of our community theatre group. Our beginnings never led us to believe we would still be presenting live theatre to audiences.

We started as part of a group of people from the village of Credenhill who put on a concert. I had written a short comedy sketch for the local playschool to perform and it was loved by our audience. Giddy with our success, somebody said: "*We should do a pantomime and you can write it*", I was asked because I was fresh from my training as a speech and drama teacher and so they all thought I would know how to do it. I was very apprehensive having only ever seen one pantomime, however, I gave it my best shot and we performed *Sleeping Beauty* that December, under the name Credenhill Clangers. We had the music teacher from the local school as pianist, (somebody who had been in an operatic society) to work out a few movements, costumes supplied from our own wardrobes or charity shop

finds and we were away.

We and our audiences enjoyed it so much we decided we would become a permanent fixture in Credenhill but probably needed a name which gave people more belief in what we were doing. We opted for 'MAGNA' which was the name of an area close by and meant Great in Latin. We felt we deserved this name now we had one production under our belts!

We then went down the road of a comedy play which was awful. Some actors went on with words hidden anywhere they could find and during the interval, one fifteen-year-old drank a half bottle of spirits pinched from her parents' drinks cabinet. We had some explaining to do and after that alcohol was strictly forbidden back stage and still is!

Shortly after Magna was established, some of the adults suggested we start a youth group and so Young Magna was born for eight to sixteen-year-olds. Then things really took off. We explored different genres and different

venues from theatres to fields to local churches to village halls. Once even performing on a stack of pallets with side curtains made from bin bags at one venue. We competed in the National Drama Festival for one act plays and won several awards for best direction, actor, set and original play.

Our fame spread and soon we were performing our annual panto, plus two plays per year and a Youth Showcase. Our youth group often acted alongside adults. Having never been interested in making a profit, we soon decided to cut our costs by playing original scripts and the honour fell to me to provide these. We have covered many difficult and topical subjects and since joining NODA have been fortunate enough to earn nominations and awards most years.

Some of our members transitioned from Young Magna and into Magna and stayed while others went on to achieve professionally in areas of the theatre as performers, technical and stage technicians. We are and always have been a fully inclusive group and have

fantastic success stories with people, who find it difficult to communicate in everyday situations, who have found a home onstage where they can be whoever they wish to be.

We have come a long way in the last forty-five years. We now have our own space in Credenhill Community

Hall which we are gradually turning into a proper working theatre space with lighting, staging, and technical advancements. NODA representatives are invited to our productions and we are always pleased to get their feedback.

Forty-five years is a long time to be

with a group of people who become more than friends, more like family. It is still a joy to see our youngest to oldest succeed no matter what problems are going on outside our magical world of live theatre.

Betty Morris



Waddington Dramatic Society take the stage – literally!

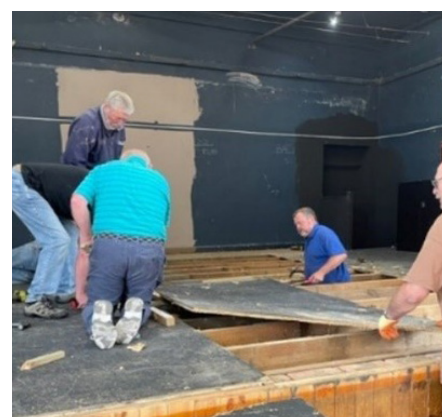
NODA East Midlands

When Waddington Dramatic Society committee decided that their tired old stage at the village hall was long overdue for a make-over, they decided that they were going to get the job done themselves. Little did they realise what an incredible, mammoth task it would turn out to be!

With the invaluable help of members and volunteers, over a physically demanding and tiring week, fuelled with endless cups of tea and coffee, the society were very proud to say that their shiny new stage was finally complete, primed and ready for their production – J B Priestley's *When We Are Married*, in May. Waddington Dramatic Society, are the 2022 winners of NODA East Midlands, District 4, award for best play for *The Flint Street Nativity* and are celebrating

their 55th anniversary this year. The society, which like many societies, nearly folded following COVID, has kept going mainly down to the tireless dedication of committee members: Chairman, David Ridout; Publicity and Secretary, Julie Addison and Treasurer, Joan King. The society has persevered going from strength to strength producing quality shows for their community. They now have a stunning new stage for all their future productions. A big thank you to Andrea Smith, of Waddington Parish Council, for funding the project and everyone who contributed. Here's to the next 55 years and many more shows to come!

Julie Addison





NODApics

A few of our member
submissions
to our
Instagram page



Gypsy
EBOS



Iolanthe
Cambridgeshire Light Opera



Everybody's Talking About Jamie
Brighton Theatre Group



Kipps The Musical
Worthing MTC



Macbeth
Sleaford Little Theatre



Seussical
SOS Presents



Six: Teen Edition
Johnstone Phoenix Youth Theatre



Hunchback of Notre Dame
Nottingham Operatic Society



Alice By Heart
UMTC



Beauty and the Beast
Harequin Youth Theatre



Barnum
Zenith Youth Theatre Company

Get in on the act!

Submit your show
pics on our website





Diving under the sea

Centre Stage Theatre London dive under the sea with their production of *The Little Mermaid*. Rising to the technical challenges, the group explain their process!

Our interpretation of the story of *The Little Mermaid* focusing on exploring the paradigm that 'the grass is always greener on the other side', reflected by Ariel's desire to be on land rather than under the sea. In order to convey this concept, we wanted there to be a contrast between scenes set under water and those on dry land. To create this we were keen to pull aesthetic inspiration from Tim Burton's traditionally 'dark and twisted' worlds to highlight how Ariel perceives her watery home to contrast with a 2D, colour-washed Gilbert and Sullivan pastiche over ground.

There were other things, that were imperative to our vision; Rollerskating Mermaids, puppets, projection and 'larger than life' demi-gods. The concept of Ursula and Triton being on trucks, and physically larger than anyone on that stage was ambitious, but we hoped we could pull it off. We wanted the show to flow effortlessly and as a creative team we agreed to avoid almost all blackouts (we had 3 in total), preferring transitions which don't impact the flow of the storytelling happening on the stage.

In realising the team's vision for this production, it quickly became clear that it was going to be a huge technical challenge. The Oratory Theatre is an enormous space to fill – broadly the size of a small west-end theatre. There are very few pre-made sets available to hire for this show and none of these really worked for this concept. We therefore took on the task of designing, building and painting a custom set to fill the space exactly to our specification.

It was a mammoth task. Over six months, the team – led

by Mark (CAD Design and Build), Sean (Lead Artist) and Sam (Build Manager) and a team of countless volunteers – designed and created a monster set; huge polystyrene rocks and pillars; five metre high projection surfaces; two sea gods on trucks; a double layer Greco-Roman ruin, a reversible arch for Ariel's Grotto as well as Ursula's cave; a custom kitchen truck and multiple 2D props for that authentic Gilbert and Sullivan aesthetic (Thanks Sean). This, and so much more, is impressive beyond belief. I am hugely grateful to them all for their commitment, and for lending their talents.

The decision was taken early not to use the usual band pit and instead place the band onstage, partly visible. This was an aesthetic choice as well as a practical one. Given some of

the cast were roller-skating in some numbers, removing any chance of a fall (however remote) seemed a sensible option. The stage design evolved to be based on a simple twin level platform built from 'Steel Deck' at 7 foot height; used for the band (on both levels) with playing space available on the upper level and a cross over available below. The deck was clad with custom cut arches and panels, simply painted to achieve a neutral surface which could be transformed, with projection, to be any of the locations from under the

sea, to royal palaces to Ursula's lair. This was complemented by a small number of flying items, a (flat) hand painted chandelier (with projected flames), a (flat) boat, a sky cloth, a white projection gauze and a willow arch drape. In addition, 2 sets of 7 foot high stairs on 3-way silent scene shifting wheels and a collection of 7 'L' shaped blocks, which had a previous life as corporate event seating, allowed us to create





'The Ship' in various configurations as well as an illusion of a rising water level in 'Kissed the Girl'. The stairs were also designed to be able to create a 'walk-down' from the upper level in certain sections.

One of the elements that makes me most proud is that, from a sustainability perspective, many of these set pieces had been previously part of other productions. The rock sections were used in a MasterCard advert for The Brits, collected directly from the studio in north London. They were then painstakingly re-shaped by hand using a mixture of hot wire and saws, then re-painted completely by our incredible scenic design team. The 10 foot pillars were used in a production in Croydon, but are unrecognised now in their ruined form. We are also hugely grateful to SEDOS (a fellow London company) who allowed us to re-use the steps from their previous production of *Titanic* and gave us scrap timber from other productions to make the miscellany of props, as well as to Geiods Musical Theatre for the re-use of the 'L' blocks first seen in their production of *Spring Awakening*. It's the collaboration across societies in central London that really makes things work and minimises waste, so important in the consideration of the wider environmental impact of such short show runs.

Furthermore, none of this would be possible without an enormous space to build and paint our set. We were lucky enough to secure storage and build time at an East London Transport servicing centre. I have certainly learnt that painting in Railway arches is almost the ideal space – it's these finds that allow you to be truly creative without constantly watching the clock of space hired by the hour. We are now sharing this space with other London companies as needed.

Adding polish to the set was John's pyrotechnic design, used only for a small section – where Triton destroys Ariel's Cave. John was able to achieve the required 'shock effect' while avoiding any hint of pantomime which can often happen with the use of pyro. The effect was created using Size M Le Maître robotics, on custom wireless control built into the Polystyrene rock truck.

Layered across the set was fully custom projected artwork, made by our team of animators (led by Adrian) just for

this production; featuring subtly-animated scenery and breath-taking animated transformation sequences that took us seamlessly from under the sea to Ursula's lair and royal palaces and back. It is the truly remarkable result of hours of bespoke design work (totalling 250GB of rendered content), and the effect was mind blowing. This included a full 'under the sea' introduction to compliment the overture, culminating in a giant whale projected across the entire stage. This section alone yielded a round of applause from our fantastic audiences. Projection was achieved with a huge 20k FOH projector covering L and R portal flats and the white gauze. Stage projection used 2 x 15k projectors with short throw lens, projected onto wooden flats clad to the band decking. Control was from QLab all triggered from the LX desk using MIDI show control. The creative team were not keen on using click tracks so all video work was built in layers to trigger in real time as the show required.

Complementing our set was an exquisite lighting design, the result of more than 100 different fixtures (lights), cleverly integrated into the space with new rigging designed specifically to cater for the unique needs of this production – we even had to add an entire new FOH rigging bar to allow for the fact that we were



retaining the stage atop of the band pit. Mixing stage light and projection is notoriously difficult, and huge care is needed to ensure animation is not washed out by lighting whilst creating the desired effects – the team achieved this with gusto elevating the experience brilliantly. LX was controlled with ETC EOS and fixtures

included ETC Source 4's and Martin Auroras

In terms of sound design we integrated an on-stage band (always tricky as the sound is less contained than in a traditional pit) and 20 radio mics, with glorious sound scaping (sourced from personal SFX libraries) and special effects with wondrous results. These things often go unnoticed but are critical in sustaining the immersion. Sound was controlled from a Yamaha QL5 (with TheatreMix for additional control) and linked to video and LX via QLab

Each of the actors themselves were costumed impeccably by Santiago, Annie, Clare and Hollie. The work here was simply astonishing. From the handmade, under-the-sea creatures (based on a morph suit then heavily customised for each creature), the tailored eels – think Cosplay, Sebastian and Flounder, an entire flock of custom-sewn gulls, Ariel's multiple outfits and, of course, the hand-crafted mermaid tails and suits (made from EVA foam then sprayed to give the effect of fish scales partnered with customised bodices and breast plates), they have relished the concept and smashed it. I was blown away by the result and forever in their debt for the months and months of hand stitching to create the show's wardrobe.

It would be remiss not to mention our sea witch Ursula and our sea god Triton. A huge thanks to Chads for creating Triton: flanked by his 2 sea horses (acting as pushers for the Truck), 8 foot tall in size, and with his tail taking hints of colour from each of his mermaid daughters' tails. Ursula's imposing presence (spreading more than 20 feet across the stage) was achieved through the combination of Annie's costume work – a corset made from 26 black leather belts with styling and make up including 6 inch nails, Rosie's puppet making – each tentacle handmade from multiple cylinders of foam with rope running through to a

puppet handle and Chad's carpentry – essentially a weight-baring frame on wheels with handles designed to silently and smoothly move in any direction to give the illusion of 'swimming', coming together to create something unique, terrifying, and equally playful. Once again 3-way scene shifter wheels were essential here. Manoeuvred by a team of 9 puppeteers (one for each tentacle and a 'pusher'), wearing custom outfits designed and made by Geri – it was a huge spectacle!

If this wasn't enough, we partnered our wardrobe with a miscellanea of puppets, created by Daniel, our puppet Master, they are a thing of beauty; be it the hand-crafted fish shoals, the floating hand-knitted octopi, the brass playing bass or the playful pufferfish (fashioned from an expanding Science ball covered in fabric). '*Under the Sea*' represented months of design and crafting from a team of more than ten dedicated makers. For '*Kiss the Girl*' we also created further hand puppets to include a full complement of 3 flamingos, 2 ducks, a turtle, 4 singing frogs and finally a huge pelican (operated by 2 people). It was a wonderful thing to watch.

The final cherry on the cake was the use of theatrical flying. An effect I have not used before, but made possible by the design of the theatre and the generous technical time awarded to use in the production schedule. We

were able to use a single fixed point pendulum flying point to achieve Ariel's ascent to the surface at the end of Act I, Scuttle's entry in Act 2 – swinging seemingly out of control and Ariel's final transformation to a human in Act II. I'd like to thank Blue Chilli Flying who were simply excellent in providing the equipment and training our operators and to all the cast and crew involved for their patience and professionalism in making such a technically complex effect become magical for our audiences.

All this is wasted effort if you don't have a wonderful army of stage management to run the show, led by Adam and Jon. They really were the dream team. We had over 200 cues called by our DSM to Follow Spots (2), LX, Sound, Video, Flies – all via closed loop comms as well as the hugely demanding set moves and people flying. Working on this show was an incredible experience. Only made possible by the huge generosity of a production team of over 60 plus other countless volunteers.

I am hugely grateful to them and to the absolutely incredible creative 'dream team' of JLC, Alexis, Paul and Tim for their exceptional work. I am hugely proud of what the team put together and I hope those that saw the production enjoyed it as much as we have putting it together.



NODA Theatre Summer School

success

I talk about the benefits of NODA Theatre Summer School endlessly – but I think it is even more powerful to hear it from the point of view of those that attend. The students who have contributed to this article are just a few of many. They have all reaped the rewards of attending NODA Theatre Summer School long after a week of expert tuition and shared experience with likeminded people.

We'll start with Tracy, who has gained so much for being a regular attendee of the school as a student of a variety of courses:

"Before I came to summer school I didn't know what to expect. As a performer I have gained lots of confidence and as a creative I gained lots of experience with the different societies I am in. I was assistant vocal coach for the panto this year, and I have been assistant director and dance captain as well."

Next, Mary who has had a similar experience – for her it has enhanced her life both within and outside of her professional role:

"I have been going to summer school for the past 11 years and participated in a range of different courses over that time. It is difficult to summarise everything I have gained from attending as the impact on me has been huge. Summer school gives you a network of people with similar interests to you which has been a great support both personally and professionally. As a secondary school drama teacher, to be taught by tutors who are currently working in the professional industry has not only improved my own performance skills, but allowed me to be confident that I am passing on up-to-date information to my students and widened my metaphorical toolbox for



the classroom. Personally, I have always loved to sing and enjoy it even more so now that I have had the opportunity to learn and perform more of the genre I love, and learned to have greater control over those pre-show nerves - all of which has led to me being more successful in auditions with local societies. Above all, the confidence summer school has given me has been life changing and opened up so many opportunities for me beyond the week of summer school itself. One of the things that makes summer school special is the range of experiences that other students bring; any level of experience is welcome. It remains my favourite week of the year and I would encourage anyone who has an interest in any aspect of theatre to give summer school a try."

Kathy has enjoyed great success as a playwright:

"In 2022, I attended the Work in Progress course at NODA Theatre Summer School, which focussed on writing and developing plays. During the week, among other things, I wrote, gave and received feedback and acted in other students' plays to help with the development of their ideas. The group and the marvellous tutor were friendly and supportive, and I ended the week exhausted, happy and confident enough

to continue with my play writing journey. I kept in touch with the other students and we regularly meet online to read and give feedback on each other's work. Since then, I have had 2 plays produced by amateur groups and have recently had my first play accepted for publication. NODA Summer School gave me a huge amount of new knowledge to apply, a support network of peers, and perhaps most importantly, the confidence to believe in my own work. I could not have done it alone."





Now let's hear from Jamie who has had the most exciting year, partly inspired by a new feature of last year's school:

"I first attended NODA Theatre Summer School in 2012, and have been most years since then. What I loved immediately about it was the supportive atmosphere. Over the years, I have grown in confidence from this school and it helped me develop the motivation to create my own piece. Early last year I started developing a short musical which needed wider feedback and workshopping. The summer school gave me the opportunity to present this during the student takeover evening. This sharing was followed by a feedback session. The positive and constructive comments lead me to believe that we were in a position to show this at the Fringe. In October, we made our submission and was immediately accepted."

I hope you can see that there are so many benefits to attending the school. Remember, these are just four examples of hundreds we could have featured. However, I know today, more than ever, cost has a big impact on our decision making – Jon a longstanding student of the school has something to say about the cost of NODA Theatre Summer School here:

"Many people who haven't attended NODA Theatre Summer School claim that it's expensive. Well, they're right. But

NODA Today - Summer 2024



not for the reasons they think. Summer school is a week of professional tuition in a range of stage disciplines and, this year, costs £720. People travel from all over the country, and beyond, to attend it and all of them need somewhere to sleep as well as food to eat so that price includes both accommodation and meals. If they were to stay at the nearby Holiday Inn in Stoke-On-Trent, whose rooms are roughly comparable, for the same duration it would cost £583 with breakfast included. Which makes all that professional training along with lunch and dinner for the week rather a bargain at effectively less than £150.

No, the real cost of summer school comes after NODA. First of all, everybody who attends will learn something about their chosen discipline and likely come home with a long shopping list. Directors, designers and stage managers alike will be heading off to Ryman's (other stationers are available), actors and singers invest in everything from technique books to vocal steamers and dancers will never have enough dancewear again. Then there are the new shows that you'll discover whilst you're there, with original cast, revival and tour CDs just waiting for you to order. Amongst those I have personally been introduced to at NODA Theatre Summer School are Barnum, The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas, Gypsy, Next To Normal, Anyone Can Whistle, Merrily We Roll Along, The Baker's Wife, Ragtime, Scarlet Pimpernel, and Come

From Away (before it even arrived in London).

The biggest cost of all, though, is likely to stem from summer school's greatest treasure – the people you will meet while you're there. New friends who share your interests who you'll want to see again and again and who frustratingly don't live anywhere near you. You'll travel to see their shows, you'll travel to see shows together, you might go to their weddings or even holiday together. (Apparently holidays somewhere other than NODA Summer School are a thing!) So, yes, it can prove to be rather expensive. And it's worth every penny."

I think that just about sums it up – hope to see you there!

Sarah Osborne
NODA Theatre Summer School
Director



Creating a show in 24 hours: Fast, furious fun raises funds

NODA East



It's a fund-raising idea that could have come straight from the imagination of the fun-loving vicar of Dibley, Geraldine Granger, herself.

To raise money for their theatre in Manningtree, Essex, the Manifest Theatre Group challenged themselves to create a stage production of the much-loved TV series, *The Vicar of Dibley*, within a 24-hour period: from handing out scripts and rehearsing actors in their roles, to costuming the cast and building a set, as well as organising the technical aspects.

And the group pulled it off a few weeks ago on 9 June: *"I was just amazed – they did such an amazing job and I'm so proud of them,"* said Alison Baker, director of *The Manifest Mini Fest* and chair of the Manifest Theatre Group of her cast and crew. *"But by the time we finished the second performance, we were absolutely on our knees!"*

Back to the beginning: a group member brought the concept of 'a show in 24 hours' to the Manifest committee as a potential fundraiser and the idea caught on quickly. *"I thought it was a brilliant idea and I wanted to run with it, but we needed to find something to do,"* Baker said. *"So, we came up with the idea of 'The Vicar of Dibley' because we wanted to do something that was really good fun."*

However, attempting to stage a full-length play from start to finish in 24 hours was problematic, *"and would have been a bit too much,"* Baker conceded. Instead of the full-length play, the Manifest group decided to seek performing rights for episodes of the TV series. The holder of the TV rights, Tiger Aspects Productions, was contacted, *"and we badgered and badgered them,"* Baker recalled, *"and I think nearly drove them mad!"*

In the end, Tiger Aspects provided the rights, and at a very low fee, for two performances of a package of two episodes. *"The episodes were only 28 minutes long, so it meant that once you've got (stage) business in and everything, each part was only going to last 35 or 40 minutes at most onstage,"* Baker said. Then, it was time to cast the show. For this production, Baker pre-cast the show, *"because I needed people that could learn lines quickly and people whose minds I could trust. They actually knew which parts they were playing, but they didn't know which episodes we were doing."* Knowing who they would be portraying helped the actors familiarise themselves with the characters' signature traits before getting into the hotbed of rehearsals.

The 24-hour marathon called for an overnight stay at their Victorian theatre for only a few hours of kip and rehearsals late into the night and early into the morning, all for the adult cast. Several children who appeared in the show had the enviable luxury of an early night and their beds at home. At the same time as the adults were going over their scripts and their scenes, the set builders and tech crew were doing their parts to ready the show's various 'locations' for a 2pm performance. Their second performance started at 5.30pm, with the marathon finally ending about 7pm.

In all, Manifest earned about £3k for themselves, made a donation to Comic Relief and left their appreciative audiences laughing. Asked if she would want to do such a project again, Baker said, *"It was really good fun, it was just really great and I don't think it would be something we ever forget...But not for a couple of years!"*

Watlington Players to stage adult panto in 24-hour dash

NODA East

In November, the Watlington Players in Watlington, Norfolk, will pick up the gauntlet to create a show in 24 hours – with an adult pantomime as their preferred presentation. A member of the Players has written an original panto for the group and its over-18s, but Director, Kevin Rooney, isn't giving any clues as to what it might be. Plans call for the event's kick-off on 1 November at 7.30pm, when the scripts are revealed, and auditions begin for the show's principals. *"We'll look at who we've got, who wants what and everyone else that's there is automatically in the ensemble or building or prop hunting,"* Rooney says.

A read-through and rehearsals begin. Then music rehearsals will begin around 9-9.30pm with Musical Director, Amy Power, *"to start running through all the songs that are going to be in it,"* says Rooney, who is the group's vice-

chair. Choreography and set building also must be fitted in, with a break for the cast tentatively scheduled *"for a few hours early in the morning. Then from about half six in the morning, we're rehearsing again,"* Rooney says, with rehearsals running throughout the day.

The sole performance will be at 7.30pm.

The Players ask that interested participants get in touch with them as they are taking sign-ups to join in the fun. Non-members of the society from beyond Watlington are invited to sign on as well, Rooney said. A production in the making for only 24 hours is a fun recruitment tool to bring on board aspiring thespians who may not have the time to get involved with a normal production that rehearses over weeks or months, Rooney suggests.

How to stage a show in 24 hours

Making a success out of staging a show in 24 hours is *"all in the planning,"* advised Alison Baker of the Manifest Theatre Group. *"The planning was quite huge. As I was directing, I had planned exactly what was going to happen at each stage of that 24 hours, so we knew what we were doing. If you didn't, you could get in a terrible muddle really."* Part of Baker's planning was pre-casting her actors, along with lining up her tech director and team, many of whom usually carry out those roles with the group's regular productions. The planning had to extend to how cast and crew would be fed during the 24 hours and knowing what kind of costuming was on hand. *"Obviously, you can't do anything until the 24-hour period starts, but you have to sort of pull everything out and then make sure everything fits."*

The countdown is on

NODA North West

The countdown is on to one of the most unusual and entertaining theatre productions of the year, *BARNUM!*

StagedRight Youth Theatre has presented its annual musical at The Sands Centre every July for the past 18 years, but, due to issues concerning concrete in the roof, the group was almost forced to cancel this year's production.

When Cumbria's leading arts venue closed last summer, StagedRight was forced to think out of the box and, one of their first ideas became their best: The Garden at Eden Marquee which is

in the grounds of Eden Golf Club.

The permanent structure is to be transformed into a circus as Barnum is the story of The Greatest Showman and set in a big top.

Barnum is a dreamer and king of humbug. He persuades passers-by to come and see the oldest women in the world, the smallest man and Jumbo, the largest elephant. The show is a cavalcade of colour, brilliant music and amazing costumes, all performed by an award-winning cast of 80 which is accompanied by a live orchestra.



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

As I continue my wanderings up and down the country, I continue to be so impressed with, well just everything! The unusual venues, the truly fantastic shows, the absolute dedication of performers, - and 'the small army of enablers', who sometimes outnumber the performers on the stage, but without the small 'army' of unseens, the productions would never hit the stage. Their dedication is just as great, but they don't receive the standing ovations and the enthusiastic applause. They do it just for 'the love of theatre' and thank heaven they do or our wonderful hobby, which we all love so much, would hardly get off the ground. They truly do make the shows and deserve our absolute thanks and gratitude, as without them, we would not be 'able to shine'. From the person who makes the tea at rehearsals, absolutely vital as any performer will tell you; the front of house teams, who welcome audiences so warmly and sell programmes and raffle tickets; of course the directors, whose vision is paramount; the MDs, orchestra; wardrobe; lighting; sound; make-up; props; chaperones; stage crews, who make cars and elephants and cardboard camels in their garages; the list is seemingly endless (and if I have forgotten anyone I am so sorry). The committees who run the society and ensure all the 'rights and legal issues' are all in order; and of course the casts who learn the lines and musical numbers and shine 'on the night'; each one plays their part in bringing these fantastic productions to the stage and I just want to say thank you ALL so very much!

As I, most unfortunately and regrettably, near the end of my term of office, I just want to say a huge thank you to all the members of every single one of the societies that I have visited, as well as all the societies who invited me but I was unable to attend, which I estimate somewhere in the region of 60. I could not be in two places at once no matter how hard I tried and there is only one of me, for which I think we can all be eternally grateful.

The total of productions visited over the year is likely to be in the region of 175 shows. I have been welcomed and made to feel 'part of the family' of whichever society I am visiting at the time. I have been warmly welcomed onto the stage to have my photo taken with the cast, when I am sure they really just wanted to get into the dressing room and get their costumes off. Thank you, I really appreciate it and it has therefore, enabled me to create a permanent record in the form of the NODA President Facebook page. Thank you

also to all the NODA Councillors and regional committees who have invited me to their conferences, enabling me to meet even more members.

Of course, all this travelling has its down side: if I never see another set of temporary lights, or roadworks, (down to a single lane on the M6!??) or motorway queue, it will be far too soon, but it has absolutely been worth all the queues, temporary lights, frustrations et al. I would not have missed a single show, so really, all this just to say thank you all so very much to each and every one of you. I have been honoured, privileged and very, very proud to serve as your president for an extra year. I said at the very beginning of my term of office, that this time I wanted to do it properly and I think I have, I hope so anyway, so just thank you to all the societies who invited me, irrespective of whether I was able to attend or not. Thank you for welcoming me into your NODA family for the evening and thank you for all the wonderful productions!

Christine Hunter Hughes
NODA National President



Immediate Past President - Nick Lawrence, National President - Christine Hunter Hughes and Vice President - Graham Liverton



StagedRight Productions - 'Barnum'



Whitehaven Theatre of Youth - 'Frozen Jr'



Tesedale Operatic Society - 'Six:Teen Edition'



Dudley Little Theatre - 'Abigail's Party'



Litchfield Operatic - 'Calendar Girls The Musical'



Barrow Operatic (BODS) - 'Guys and Dolls'

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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

Our youth event by the sea



At NODA North East Gala Weekend in Bridlington in April, young people from around the region were invited to spend the day with us and experience some of what Gala Weekend has to offer.

Those attending had the opportunity to join workshops with other weekend participants including dance and puppetry, along with two bespoke sessions of drama and singing. Having the chance to work with experienced

tutors is one of the benefits of hosting the youth event at Bridlington. Another is that the young people get to spend the day by the sea in the fabulous venue of The Spa. In the evening participants were able to stay and watch *Call Me Dusty* by LYM Productions having met some of the cast and crew during the day - as well as getting a close look at the set.

Based on the feedback the young people had a great day.

Bella (16) said she thought it all seemed very professional and Ruby (17) explained that: "We had a drama workshop and learnt how to do monologues, analyse characters and things like that. In the singing workshop we worked on diction and breathing and harmonies."

Now in its eighth year, the youth event is a great way to integrate an offer for youth into an adult event which is attended by over 500 members. Adult participants can talk with the young people and learn what is available for youth and younger members can ask questions about NODA. They get the chance to meet the national president, hear about long service awards as well as being updated on the summer school offer by Sarah Osborne, director of NODA Summer School.

It is also hoped that some participants will come back as adults and enjoy the full weekend.

Jo Sykes
Youth Co-ordinator
NODA North East





Super swing saves *Six: Teen Edition*!

NODA Scotland

When *Six: Teen Edition* was released for amateur Youth Theatre Societies, I am sure the excitement that we felt in Johnstone was experienced across many youth societies up and down the country. The screams of excitement that rang out from our members, and the shock on their faces when we were able to announce our next forthcoming production, will always live in my memory.

At Johnstone Phoenix we always strive, as best as we can, to bring current and topical musical theatre to our local community and allow our young members the opportunity to perform shows that might not always be accessible to them in adult societies, or indeed as part of their careers, if they choose to follow the musical theatre career path. With

Six: Teen Edition, the cast were able to experience this new treasured show fully and they embraced every second of the rehearsal period. As part of the production team, I will be biased, but the commitment, drive and talent displayed by our cast of Amelia McDonald as Catherine of Aragon, Olivia Regan as Anne Boleyn, Lucy Smith as Jane Seymour, Grace Todd as Anna of Cleves, Nieve Shankland as Katherine Howard and Emma McCulloch as Catherine Parr was exceptional. I was, and still am, so proud of each of them for bringing this production to life and earning the standing ovations and praise they received after.

With wanting them to experience the full West End feel of the show, and with consent from their parents, we booked

the shows over one day meaning three shows on the Saturday with a dress and tech run on the Friday. Running for about 90 minutes, and adequate breaks in between on the Saturday, we were confident on a great result. However, the one part of the *Six* experience we didn't foresee for our production, was the need of a super swing. Fans of the show will be aware that swings and alternates are so key to the professional productions, with lots of stories about last minute call backs from past cast members. Great stories to read, but not one you want to experience or indeed write yourself. So, with that in mind, after 3 months of strong rehearsals, every part of our vision clicking into place, and with 5 days to go until the first curtain up ... our Anne Boleyn was admitted to hospital! With Olivia's health and

wellbeing, a priority and thankfully in hand, as a production team we set about plan options on how to keep the dream of performing alive. Monday of show week was spent with frantic messages on what we would do. Cancelling altogether last minute would incur financial implications that could impact us as a club, and we had 5 other cast members who would have been heartbroken at the prospect of that happening. We also didn't know how long Olivia would be out of action for. It could be a quick recovery, or take longer, meaning the unknown was harder to plan for.

In comes the idea of a swing standby, but who could that be? As a newer release, this isn't a show that has been performed a lot recently, so the chance of finding someone who knew the part to step in was exceptionally low. The top age restriction of the license also limited the chance for a lot of ex-members or local am-dram performers who could pick up learning a part so quickly. Then enters the hero of our piece, ex-member and our forever titled Super Swing, Katie Wood. Still within the performing age group for the license of the show, and knowing the cast from previous productions, Katie accepted the challenge and agreed to learn the part, even though she knew if the situation changed, she might not get to perform.

Now with 3 days to go, a script was dropped into her on Tuesday night, and extra rehearsals planned for the Wednesday and Thursday evenings with Katie along with the other cast members, the hard work began. Katie arrived at the first rehearsal, having only had the material for less than 24 hours, off book, absorbed every piece of direction and choreography we threw at her and was giving a knockout performance already. The rehearsal time with the production team and cast was in total 6 hours and that included delivering a flawless run at the end of the Thursday night rehearsal. That rehearsal time and hard work at

home, our super swing was ready, our other cast members were comfortable and we were set for the Friday dress rehearsal and shows on Saturday.

Thankfully, Olivia made a good recovery during the week and was able to attend the dress run, however with her health in mind we agreed that she would perform the first Saturday afternoon and evening shows, with Katie taking on the second Saturday afternoon show. Also being on standby in case she needed to jump in.

I am please to say we had a very happy ending, Olivia got to perform her shows safely and was grateful for the longer

rest in between the Saturday shows and Katie also got an opportunity to show off her hard work. Credit should also be given to the other cast members who handled the change in casting between the shows seamlessly throughout each performance. All six of our original line up embraced Katie into their cast bond beautifully.

Not the path the team envisaged at the start of this exciting rehearsal period, but one that made this show even more memorable for our cast and crew. The team at Johnstone Phoenix Youth Theatre are so proud of our outstanding cast of seven who made Six come to life.



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.)

Please note - the competition rules change from 1st October 2024 for some regions.



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

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mhfaengland.org

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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.

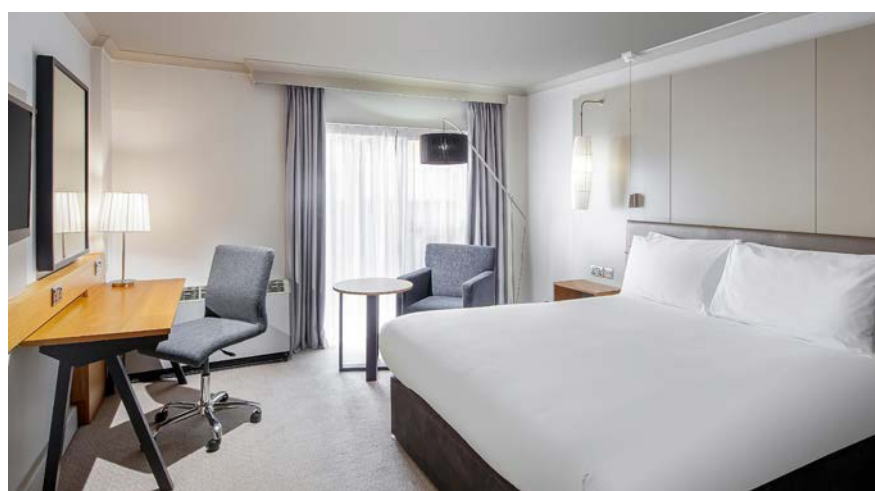
£78.00 per person

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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Staveley Amateur Operatic Society celebrating 70 years

NODA North West

In a village just outside Kendal, Cumbria a group of enthusiastic performers are beginning rehearsals for Gilbert & Sullivan's *Iolanthe*.

Staveley Amateur Operatic Society are celebrating their 70th Anniversary this year, and what better way than giving a comical nod to the election, by proving that fairies can influence parliament!

In 1953, a group of local, enthusiastic music lovers formed Staveley Amateur Operatic Society and it was proposed by Mr D Long that they produced The Gilbert & Sullivan operetta, *The Mikado*. Rehearsals began and the society was led by Miss Elsie Storey as the first chair. A social committee was quickly formed, and Mr Hayton was appointed the society's first musical director. In October 1954, *The Mikado* was performed at Staveley Village Hall and was well received by the village, so the society proposed to put on *The Gondoliers* the following year.

Thus, Staveley Amateur Operatic Society was fully formed and, since then, it has put on a show every year, except 1964, and during Covid.

To date over 500 people have appeared on the stage at Staveley Village Hall, with many more helping out behind the scenes and some of our current members have been with the society for many years, performing in numerous shows. Our current membership ranges from ages 8 to over 80 and all have a wonderful time, learning from each other.

As with all societies, producers and musical directors have come and gone with 18 previous producers and



1980 - *Patience*



2023 - *The Pirates of Penzance*

8 musical directors. David Tattersall took over as musical director in 2007, missing only 2010 and, in 2023, Jo and Chris Worton took on the producer role for their first time. They were delighted to win District 11 best Gilbert & Sullivan for their production of *The Pirates of Penzance*. This year's *Iolanthe* will be just as much fun for all concerned.

As we all know, amateur theatre is full of incredibly talented people from all walks of life. But, let's be honest, it's the funny stories that make everything so much more memorable: the wig getting caught on the tree; the trousers dropping to the floor when least expected; the look of terror on

the MD's face when the principal starts singing the wrong verse; the wonderful ad-libbing from chorus members whilst awaiting the late arrival of a principal who is playing cards in the dressing room, the list is endless and wonderfully funny (although maybe not at the time for those concerned!).

SAOS has gone from strength to strength since coming back from the awful period that was Covid, with numbers increasing all the time and new members swelling our ranks, bringing new ideas and forging new friendships. We will always welcome new members if you would like to come and join us, either on stage or behind the scenes.

Being a NODA Rep

NODA South East



It's been almost a year and a half since I became a NODA representative. I had no real idea what it involved. Each area is divided into regions and regions into districts. As a rep, I had 18 different groups. I had no idea there were so many and most of them were unknown to me.

I have worked in many areas of theatre in professional and amateur arenas as a reviewer for many publications and online services. As a writer I enjoy writing, but each place has a different

style, and keeping reviews readable but including the salient points is difficult. And they vary in quality and length; one review from an Edinburgh Fringe took me longer to write than them to perform. Maybe not everyone knows, reviewers – unless they work for well-known or national publications don't get paid. It costs in time and money to see the show (even if the ticket is free). But we do it for the love of the theatre. Writing a report for NODA is different; all the aspects of production are covered. We have a word count guide but I feel an enormous responsibility to represent the production fully and note all aspects. Because I work in theatre, I appreciate how much work it takes to bring something to the stage, I ensure everything is covered. As a NODA rep, I want to support and value everything I see regardless of the outcome. I believe in continuous learning and improvement, so I view feedback is a gift and essential to help us move upwards.

Three things to remember about a NODA rep.

1. They have come to see the show because they love theatre.

2. There is often lots to learn from their feedback: positive things to repeat, other areas to learn from or improve. Listen to all the feedback, even if you don't like it.

3. Ultimately, it's only one person's opinion.

During 2023, I visited all who invited me and covered a couple outside my area. The variety was breathtaking, ranging from massive musical theatre companies putting on stellar shows, to plays in village halls and everything in between. I've covered the complete area and it's been a complete joy to meet each company and the truly talented and committed people. The innovation, the clever additions of lighting or sound effects, the ingenious sets that some people have created – on top of the acting, singing and dancing on show, has astounded me. It's reminded me, with absolute certainty, that productions that are technically amateur, are superior to professional theatre. Theatre is a diverse and wonderful place to be.

Susanne Crosby
District 1 South East Representative
and Youth Co-ordinator

Telling Tales at the Library!

NODA South West

St Austell AOS was approached by Cornwall Libraries to enquire whether we would like to contribute to National Story Telling Week, which ran from 27th January to 4th February 2024. The book, chosen by Karen Burdon, was *The Baddies* by Julia Donaldson.

St Austell AOS prides itself on working in, and with, the local community and were delighted to assist in the project.

The society members jumped at the chance and a group read passages of the story, also selected by Karen, at Bodmin Library.

The event was a great success for everyone involved! You can see and hear the society's readings on the St Austell Amateur Operatic Society Facebook page.

This community focus is very important to the society who are also giving students at St Austell College valuable work experience time with their forthcoming production, leading up to their April 8th launch of *Guys and Dolls* at the Keay Theatre, St Austell.

Margaret Jane

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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.

A chip off the old BBLOC!

NODA South West



BBLOC's *Joseph and the Amazing Technicoloured Dreamcoat* 2023. Credit: Jane Kerfoot

Bournemouth and Boscombe Light Opera Company - known locally as BBLOC, (pronounced B-block) started life as Boscombe Light Opera Company in 1954, and is Bournemouth's largest amateur musical theatre company. BBLOC has often led the way with new shows - *New Moon* in 1962, *Naughty Marietta* in 1964, and *The Count of Luxembourg* in 1969, were all firsts in the South of England and more recently, *Sister Act* in 2014, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* in 2018 and *Kinky Boots* in 2022.

Auditions and membership

BBLOC is a membership company requiring auditions to join. Auditions are held once or twice each year and involve performing a song and learning a dance routine. Successful company membership entitles a person to audition for forthcoming shows but,

because BBLOC's membership is now very large, does not guarantee a place in the cast. Members are encouraged to help with productions in other ways if they are not successful. There are also other types of membership available.

Children and young people

BBLOC does not have a dedicated youth section but membership is available to anyone over the age of 16 years. In addition, our current Director, Helen Barrington, often puts children into a production to add variety and make the ensemble more realistic. Then, of course, there are shows which feature children such as our last show - *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* - which involved 2 teams of 20 children. We auditioned over 100 children for that one.

Increasing professionalism

BBLOC hired its first professional director in 1972. The company now pays a full production team - director, musical director, choreographer, production manager and stage manager. This is probably unusual amongst amateur companies and costs a lot of money, but the Pavilion Theatre in Bournemouth is a large professional theatre with 1448 seats. The company must hold its own against professional touring productions to be able to continue putting on shows there. Lighting and sound, sets and costumes are hired in and the members of the orchestra are all paid professional musicians.

Setting a budget/publicising the show

All of this means that there are huge risks involved in putting on shows of this scale. It requires a rigorous review



BBLOC's *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* 2017. Credit: Jane Kerfoot

and monitoring of expenditure and a clear plan of the way in which that money will be raised. The company is run by a committee which sets a detailed budget at the beginning of the season and monitors this throughout. Setting ticket prices is always a challenge – balancing the need to pay for the show with a consideration of what customers will pay and working out a break even amount that needs to be achieved.

Publicity is organised with military precision. The company is divided into teams, each of which have an area to cover with flyers and posters. Principals give interviews on local radio and the cast perform at local festivals and fetes. One year, we even managed to get adverts on the sides of the local buses! Social media has, of course, become a great platform for publicity and the company's publicity officer puts together videos of rehearsals in the run up to show week.

Surviving Covid

Covid was devastating for all forms of theatre. BBLOC had to cancel their production of *Saturday Night Fever* a

[NODA Today](#) - Summer 2024

month before it was due to go into the theatre. This was very disappointing for the cast but the company was covered by NODA insurance which meant we could cover the costs already incurred and start up again once lockdown was over.

Supporting Charities

Each year, BBLOC chooses a charity to support. Last year, that charity was Macmillan Caring Locally. This was particularly appropriate as the first show the company performed in 2023, was *Calendar Girls the Musical*. As well as the usual fundraising activities and bucket collections, the cast created a calendar in exactly the way that the original *Calendar Girls* did for their branch of the Yorkshire WI. Ours didn't exactly go global, but it was very popular and, at the end of the year, our chairman was able to present the charity with a cheque for £5,528.

Our 70th Year Production

To celebrate the company's 70th year, it is presented *42nd Street* from 31 July – 3 August at the Pavilion Theatre, Bournemouth. It was another dazzling production with a great line up

of principals and a fantastic troupe of tap dancers. They were put through their paces by our choreographer who has herself performed in the show in London and on tour. Hopefully, it was as successful as our last show – *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* – which virtually sold out 6 performances (including 3 on the Saturday from the heroic cast) and was nominated for a NODA award.

"Come and see those dancing feet. On the avenue I'm taking you to, 42nd Street." We would love to see you there.

Jane Kerfoot

Robert T Lumsden

1934-2024

NODA Past President



Following the passing of Bert Lumsden on 20 June 2024, after a short illness, one word has been used by all who have paid tribute – gentleman. Bert was indeed a gentleman who devoted a significant amount of time and effort in supporting amateur theatre locally in Dundee, as a member of Dundee Operatic Society and NODA Regional Representative, across Scotland as NODA Scotland Councillor and latterly across the UK as NODA National President.

With his wife, Anne, being a member of Dundee Operatic Society, it was almost inevitable that Bert would become involved with the club. Whilst never appearing on stage, Bert worked away in the background. Initially elected as secretary of the club in 1966, he served in that role until being elected treasurer in 1974. In 1975, he was elected vice-president becoming president from 1976 until 1979. Bert also served on the casting committee as well as working front of house during show week. When he stepped down as president, Bert was made an honorary vice-president of the club.

As well as Dundee Operatic Society, Bert was also a great supporter of the Whitehall Theatre in Dundee helping to develop it into the success it is today. He served as a trustee for several years before handing it over to his replacement as regional representative, Roger Buist. He was also a patron of Downfield Musical Society from 2000 until his passing.

When Jack Underwood became NODA Scotland Regional Councillor in 1984, Bert was elected to succeed him as regional representative for district 2. He worked tirelessly supporting the members in the district offering help and support and making regular visits to both their rehearsals and productions, always accompanied by Anne.

When Celia Walker became NODA National President in 2003, Bert was honoured to be elected to replace her as NODA Scotland Councillor. This role saw Bert and Anne travelling all

over Scotland to visit member club's productions. At each visit they always took time to speak to all involved both on and off stage and because of these visits made many lasting friendships across the country. In his role as councillor, Bert represented NODA Scotland on the NODA Council where he worked hard for the interests of the membership north of the border, earning the respect and admiration of his fellow council members. During his time as councillor, Bert, with the support of Anne, organised the annual NODA Scotland conference at Peebles Hydro ensuring the weekends were always a great success.

In 2008, Bert was thrilled to be elected NODA National President resulting in two conferences that year at Peebles Hydro within the space of a few weeks! His new role saw him and Anne travel all over the UK representing NODA at productions and regional conferences. When his year in office came to an end, Bert continued to





serve on NODA Council until having the honour of being elected NODA National President for a second time in 2013. Once again, Bert and Anne fully immersed themselves in the role and welcomed the chance to engage once again with members all over the country.

When Bert finally stepped down from NODA Council in 2017, many warm tributes were paid to him for his dedicated and diligent service over so many years. He was thanked for his wise council but most importantly for his and Anne's friendship over that time.

Despite recent ill health Bert and Anne continued to attend the NODA Scotland conference and visit numerous productions across the country always on hand with a friendly word of advice or support. Bert was

due to turn 90 in September this year and both he and Anne were very much looking forward to catching up with friends at Peebles in October when NODA Scotland will celebrate 70 consecutive conferences at the Hydro.

Over so many years, Bert and Anne were a constant at shows all over the country and at Peebles Hydro. Bert will be missed by members across the country and NODA Scotland gives thanks for his unstinting service and dedication to amateur theatre.

NODA extends its sympathy to his wife Anne at this sad and difficult time. Bert, thank you for all you did on behalf of NODA but most importantly thank you for being a friend.

Stuart McCue-Dick
NODA Scotland Councillor



HADOS's *Laramie Project* offers 'great beauty, sadness'

NODA East



We know about the horrific end of life suffered by gay university student Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming, USA before *The Laramie Project* even starts. The hours of torture and finally, his death are not the climactic moments of the three-act play in which as few as eight actors portray 60 characters. The play begins with the aftermath of a hate crime. It ends with a glimpse of hope as Laramie's townspeople, Shepard's family, media, medical and emergency teams and more both take hold and let go of the murder as they look toward an uncertain legacy.

The Laramie Project is unsettling, profound and questioning of US society, and probably societies beyond the US, as it explores the reactions of a cross-section of Americana to a heinous, highly personalised crime. It is verbatim theatre, based on more than 200 interviews conducted by the Tectonic Theatre Project theatre of inhabitants of the town, published news reports and company members' own journal entries reflecting their

experiences and observations when they visited Laramie after Shepard's murder. Visiting for the first time four weeks after the crime, the TTP team revisited Laramie several times over the next two years under the leadership of Moises Kaufman, director, playwright and TTP leader, to gather information and insights that could create a play.

Hertford Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Society's 2023 production of *The Laramie Project* was recently recognised as an outstanding drama production by NODA East in its 2023 regional awards. With the focus clearly on characterisation, *The Laramie Project* not only gives theatre companies the chance to weigh in artistically on social issues, but it offers actors the challenge of portraying multiple characters with a variety of accents and points of view. It was a dramatic challenge that HADOS's Anna Palmer was keen to take on. "I just pitched it and said, 'Look, there's a play that I've always wanted to do. I think it would be perfect for our (studio) space, because you don't really need anything. But I knew it was going

to be a challenge," Palmer said, "mainly because it is in a style of performance that we haven't tended to do before. As a society, I knew finding the cast was going to be tricky. And actually, that was the trickiest bit."

Fellow HADOS member Gina Rogers stepped up to co-direct with Palmer, but at one point, the women doubted that they were going to do the show because casting was indeed proving difficult. "We really need quality people – we need commitment, we need time. It's a big, big job," Palmer recalled. But performers who already were on board encouraged them to stick with the production saying, "We need to do this. This is exciting because it's so different. But also," Palmer said, "I think they started to feel like it was going to be a very special experience."

The scarcity of cast meant that Palmer herself took on roles within the play and eventually, *The Laramie Project* was cast. "And along the way, I made contact with the Matthew Shepard Foundation, and they were brilliant. They supported us with some resources; we have some lovely posters they gave us. And then I got an email saying, 'Would you like to talk with Dennis Shepard [Matthew's father]?'"

And of course Palmer and the cast did speak with Shepard senior, whom Palmer described as "an amazing, amazing man, still working to deliver the message of 'Let's be kind.' He was open to talking about everything, and he shared, very frankly about what he felt.

I mean, by this point," Palmer said, "the cast was fully invested in this powerful story. We felt privileged to be sharing it. And then after speaking with him [Dennis



Shepard], we were all in tears. It was very emotional. And all of the audiences were deeply, deeply impacted by the play."

The set was minimal, with a chair here or there and moved occasionally. A single chair was lit by a spotlight during the action to signify the fence that Matthew Shepard was tied to and beaten. Blocks of wood ringed the performance area, and characters might sit there as they transitioned on and offstage. "So, there was always movement," Palmer said, "and the movement allowed people to make costume changes on the stage, in front of the audience. And they [costumes] were very simple so we asked all of the cast to find their own base costume – jeans, trousers, leggings so we added things for different characters like a jacket, a neckerchief, a hat. We did use an orange prison outfit for one actor when he was playing [murderer] Aaron McKinney, and a judge's gown but that was it. We had a clothing rail on the set so all the costumes were there to be on, taken off, hung up."

The sensitive nature of the play's content could have proved difficult for the cast, Palmer acknowledged. "I think we really tried to check in with people because there were times when we

all were finding what we were delivering quite moving, and the company really came together; I think people found it a safe space to be open about themselves, you know."

In the early stages of preparing the production, "a few people who were on board to start off with chose not to continue" because, Palmer thinks, they found the conflict between the points of view expressed in the dialogue "too tricky. Obviously, religion is challenged, sexuality is challenged. Even with the audiences, people I knew were listening to things that maybe they felt very personally about".

The audience never meets a physical

embodiment of Matthew Shepard, Palmer pointed out, saying, "It's one of the things that is both beautiful and difficult about it. You get to know his character through different prisms, just what people share about him."

Moisés Kaufman could have been speaking for Anna Palmer when he writes in his introduction to the play, "The experience of working on 'The Laramie Project' has been one of great sadness, great beauty, and perhaps most important, great revelations – about our nation, about our ideas, about ourselves."

DeeDee Doke
NODA East





Panto Scripts



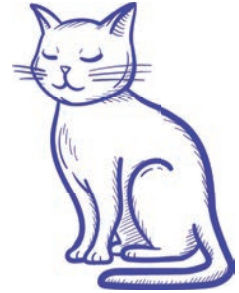
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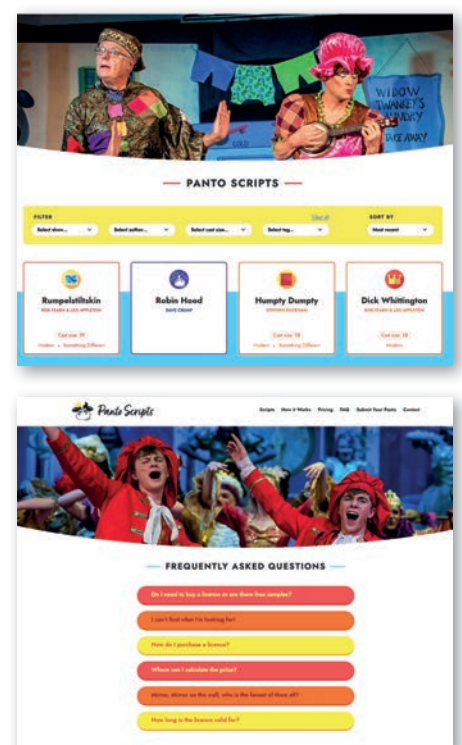
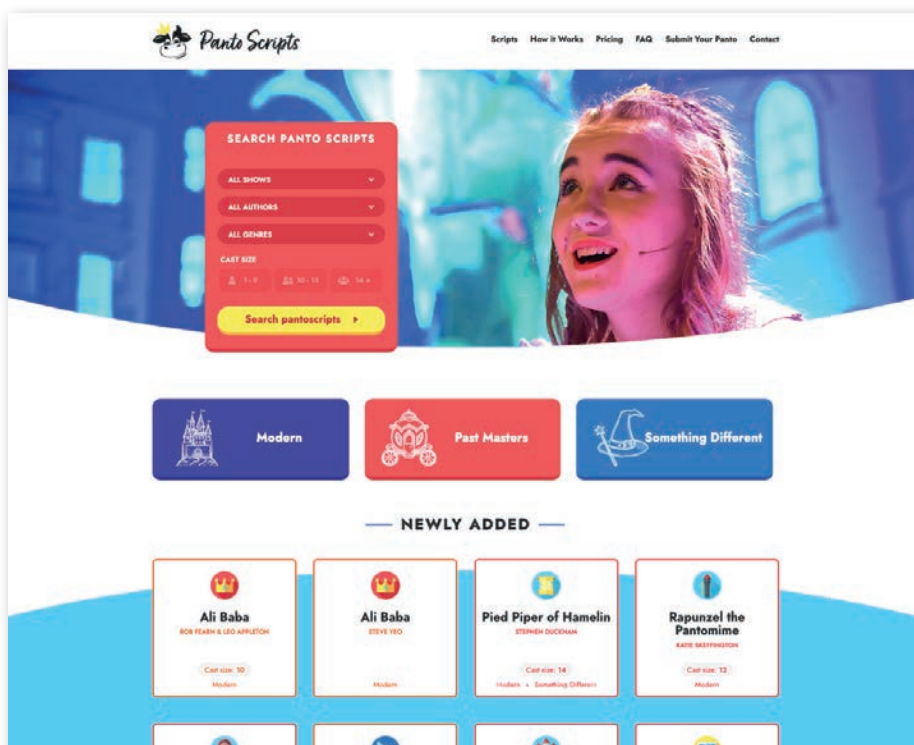


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Clarke & Clarke

Cinderella

Bradford & Webster
Leonard Caddy
Peter Denyer
Stephen Duckham
Long & Rawnsley
David Swan
Rob Fearn & Leo Appleton
Dave Crump
Amanda Craib
John Birchley
Clarke & Clarke
Colin Barrow

Dick Turpin

Colin Barrow
Dave Crump

Dick Whittington

Bradford & Webster
Peter Denyer
Stephen Duckham
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Helen Gard

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Clarke & Clarke

Humpty Dumpty

Stephen Duckham
Ron Hall

Jack & The Beanstalk

Bradford & Webster
Peter Denyer
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Ron Hall

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Ron Hall
Long & Rawnsley

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Long & Rawnsley
Stephen Duckham
David Swan

Puss in Boots

Leonard Caddy
Stephen Duckham
Long & Rawnsley
Rob Fearn & Leo Appleton
Colin Barrow

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Robert Marlowe

Rapunzel

Bradford & Webster
Katie Skeffington
Amanda Craib
Helen Gard

Red

Gillian Coley & Julie Salmon

Red Riding Hood

Stephen Duckham
Colin Barrow

Red Riding Hood and the Three Little Pigs

Dave Crump

Robin Hood

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Dave Crump
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Leonard Caddy
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Ron Hall
Helen Gard
Colin Barrow

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Ron Hall

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Colin Barrow

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Stoke Youth Musical Theatre Company

- 45 years and still growing

NODA West Midlands



All Together Now - 2021

Stoke Youth Musical Theatre Company was originally formed as the youth section of the former City of Stoke-on-Trent Operatic Society in 1979. The youth section age range was 11 to 21 and it was governed by five members of the former society's executive committee. Sadly, those five are no longer with us.

The first production was *Rock Nativity* by Jackie Trent and Tony Hatch. Jackie had been brought up in Newcastle-under-Lyme. This was performed in St John's Church Hall in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. The next productions were a repeat of *Rock Nativity* and *Patience* at The Mitchell Memorial Theatre, also in Hanley.

During the 45 years, and to the end of 2024, sixty-three productions have been performed. Thirty-eight were at The Mitchell Memorial Theatre and twenty-two at the Stoke Repertory Theatre. The remaining three were at St John's Church Hall in Hanley, The New Victoria Theatre, Basford and Stoke Minster.

Rehearsals were held at various school and community halls in Stoke-on-

Trent. Amateur directors and musical directors were used to bring these productions to fruition and from them the young members learned various aspects of stagecraft. Some of these directors had been former members of the youth section. One professional director was employed which gave them a totally different aspect to theatre.

In the early days, six older members of the youth section formed a cabaret group and performed at a large number of private functions.

In 2006, the main society ceased production so the Youth Section was reformed as Stoke Youth Musical

Theatre Company. This company is commonly known as Stoke Youth and is governed by a board of trustees.

Since then, productions have been staged either at The Mitchell Memorial Theatre or Stoke Repertory Theatre, the latter being our permanent home. We now have our own premises including rehearsal room and workshop in Hanley which is only a stone's throw from the Repertory Theatre.

During its existence, the company has won many awards, both locally and nationally, for our productions including multiple NODA best production awards.

We are very proud that many of our former members have attended drama colleges and made musical theatre their careers.

We will always be grateful for the help we have received from parents and friends, who have made scenery, worked backstage, chaperoned, sorted costumes and taken on front of house duties. No production would be successful without this support.

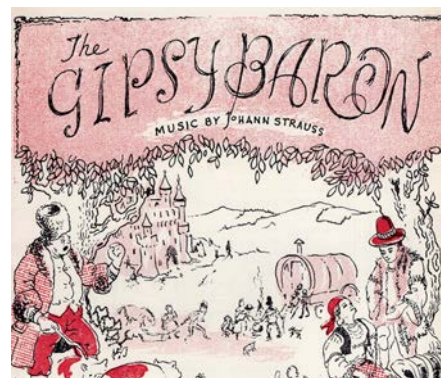
Wyn Mason
SYMTC President



Evita - 2013

Beaconsfield Operatic Society Centenary 1924 – 2024

NODA North



A major source of reference has been Jim Harland's books on The History of Blyth and, specifically, Trevor W Harder's article on Beaconsfield Operatic Society.

In the early 1920s, an enthusiastic band of singers in Blyth formed a musical group with possibly the longest title for such an organisation: The Beaconsfield Street Primitive Methodist Church Amateur Operatic Society. The singers, all practising Methodists at the church, staged a number of small productions before embarking on an ambitious operetta, *The Rebel Maid*, but it was a decision to perform one of Gilbert & Sullivan's Savoy Operas in the town, every year, which established the society's reputation.

Early shows were performed on the stage of the upstairs hall of Blyth Miners' Welfare, but in the mid-1930s the producer left the area. The society continued, but only performed concert versions of the shows. Towards the end of the decade, things were looking up when a young teacher, Mrs Renee Gallon, offered to direct another version of *The Rebel Maid*. Sadly, the outbreak of war dashed all hopes of a resumption.

Beaconsfield Street Primitive Methodist Church Amateur Operatic Society returned in 1962, with a school production of *Iolanthe*.

At the inaugural meeting, held in Beaconsfield Street Church Hall, on 1st May 1963, it was decided to shorten the pre-war name to Beaconsfield Operatic Society and to present *The Mikado* in Newlands School Hall. This was very successful, despite a few mishaps which almost called a halt to the show. Some of that cast are still involved with Beaconsfield to this day. This was followed by *The Gondoliers*, a much happier show, plain sailing and devoid of mishaps. The society went on to stage the rarely seen *Emerald Isle*. Chappell, the rights holders found, however, that all the band parts had been destroyed in a fire and had not been replaced as no one had wanted to do the show for years. They discovered that their warehouse in Sydney, Australia, still had a set which were airmailed to Blyth, fortunately at their own expense. Apparently, neither the cast nor the public thought the show the least bit memorable.

Normal service was resumed with *The Pirates of Penzance* and then *Yeomen of the Guard*. The society then moved away from G & S with *The Gypsy Baron*.

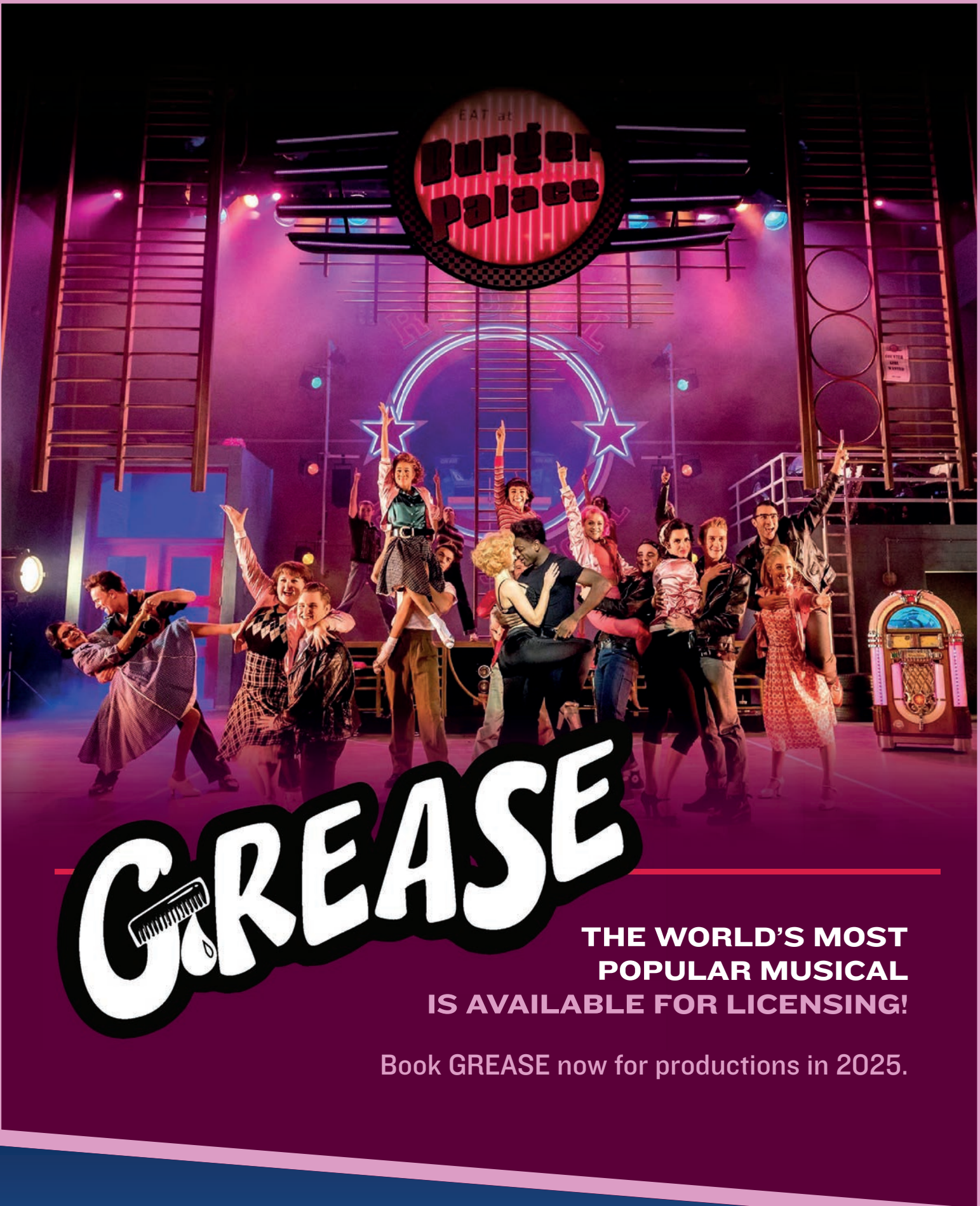
By 1974, the society moved from Newlands School into the Wallaw Cinema, now Wetherspoons, which was a great challenge because of the enormous number of seats to fill, difficult stage and poor dressing room facilities.

Beaconsfield Street Church buildings were sold to Blyth Arts & Community Association, and is now the Phoenix Theatre. We were able to sail back home with *HMS Pinafore* in 1976. This was the first of 14 annual spring presentations of the Savoy Operas at The Phoenix, which, alongside the October musicals at the Wallaw, seem to represent Beaconsfield's hey-day.

Our Centenary Concert in April 2024, gave us an opportunity to remember all of those who are no longer with us but whose contribution to Beaconsfield Operatic Society over very many years, is immense. We also had the opportunity to express our thanks to everyone still supporting us who has helped us in so many ways over the years. Thank you. We were particularly pleased that our NODA Representative, and former member, Ken Allan, was able to join us for our Centenary Concert, accompanied by Pauleen Gilbert, another former member and, together with her husband, Bill, all are great friends of Beaconsfield Operatic Society.

We look forward to our centenary production of Disney's *Beauty & the Beast* at The Phoenix Theatre from 8th to 12th October 2024. It is the future, another exciting challenge for our society and one we are looking forward to very much.

Michael Douglas



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Historic setting provides stage for HYT production

NODA East



Joshua Slade was the last person to be hanged for murder in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, in a case dotted with twists and turns. Arrested for the murder of the Reverend Joshua Waterhouse in the nearby village of Stukeley, during a botched burglary, Slade initially looked likely to escape punishment for his crime. However, he subsequently confessed in graphic detail to killing Waterhouse, was sentenced to hang and was executed on 1 September 1827.

A shocking crime for the community at the time, yes, but not well remembered within the mainstream population nearly 200 years later. However, the time-travelling gifts of theatre have put the crime back into the public gaze locally with Huntingdon Youth Theatre (HYT)'s production *The Trial of Joshua Slade*, which featured an exciting history lesson for cast, crew and its audiences. The play was performed for a four-night run in the very courtroom at the now Huntingdon Town Hall, where young Slade was tried and convicted.

"Courtroom number one was where we actually performed the trial re-enactment, and that courtroom is exactly as it was the day he was tried,"

says Dominic Whitehead, HYT's founder and chair. "It's only had a few licks of paint and some IT facilities put in but most of it is intact with the dock, all the woodwork, all the seating – the jury benches are exactly as they were so our re-enactments took place in the right place in the right setting. And we were lucky enough to be able to use the Assembly Room in the upstairs of the building to perform the first half of the play."

Whitehead's wife, Beryl-Anne, had researched the crime itself at the National Archives in Kew "so we had all the trial documents," Dominic says. *"And we learned an awful lot about the murder and the run-up to it, so we were able to write a play which actually had the murder, the finding of the body, the investigation and inquest. We did that in the Assembly Room upstairs, and then we took our audiences down into the courtroom for the second half, where we enacted the trial and then told the story of what happened to Slade afterwards."*

Beryl-Anne was allowed to break the seal on the old documents that nobody had opened since 1827. *"We were asking, should we doing this sort of thing, and the National Archives are saying, yes, you should, because these*

documents are here to be read – it's not enough for them to be museum exhibits. This is an archive!" Whitehead says.

HYT, which Whitehead describes as "a completely inclusive theatre group," had the good fortune to experience a variety of special activities in preparation for the production. *"The kids found it educational. They learned an awful lot,"* Whitehead says. *"They were surprised it was a real case and were incredibly excited when we took them down to the courtroom. They met the mayor (of Huntingdon), they went through the town hall."* Also exciting for the young troupe, was playing real, named characters such as the case investigators, the local surgeon, a constable, the coroner, the judge and Slade himself.

Asked to describe the impact of the special venue for HYT's constituents of cast, crew and audiences, Whitehead says, *"The venue was quite special. As an amateur historian, I found it quite evocative, and I think the audience found that as well. A lot of audience feedback told us that they didn't realise there had been such events here. So, yes, evocative, quite an unusual set of circumstances."*

Break a Leg – but not literally!

NODA North East



On Thursday 9th May, I attended The Lamproom Theatre Barnsley to watch The Lamproom MTC's production of *Priscilla Queen of The Desert*. As usual I took a photo of the programme to post on Facebook, tagged the various members who are friends and put my usual "Break a Leg" message to them. Little did I know that somebody would take it literally.

The show went really well with all the principals proving why they had been given their respective parts. In fact, everyone on stage worked extremely well, as we have come to expect from this society.

The dancing, singing and acting was first class which the entire audience loved all the way through from start to

the end.

Towards the end of the show, there is a floor show during which Bernadette, Tick and Felicia enter the stage in various costumes, one of which is a bathing costume and flippers. It was after this particular number, when all three, who had been dancing at the back of the stage as they had rehearsed, quickly raced off stage. This was when Robert Gordon, who was playing Adam/Felicia, fell and went over on his foot. He said he was not exactly sure how he did it as it was during a blackout.

Robert said he felt his foot and immediately thought he had just pulled a muscle. As a dancer, Robert said he is used to foot injuries and little twinges

etc. He quickly took off his flippers, leotard, hair cap and sunglasses and put on his dress, wig, gloves and silver heels; he had no time to worry about his foot and whether it was OK or not!

Robert went on, continued on with the next scene, came off again and into his favourite costume for 'Ayres Rock' which included walking boots. It was at this point that Robert thought he had really hurt his foot. Robert said trying to pull on the walking boots was a bit of a struggle, but as they were at the point to get onstage the pain started to increase. As he waited for his cue, Robert started to test his foot by putting a little more weight on it, he thought: "*If I can get past the Kylie medley there isn't much walking to do during the number, 'Up Where We Belong',*" which the show had been leading to and was his favourite number to perform.

Once the number had finished, Robert went outside to his dressers who told him he had broken his foot.

Robert said it felt different to a twisted ankle or sprain, he was asked what he wanted to do which he replied, "*I have five minutes left and I'm finishing it in heels.*" He squeezed into the shoes and did the finale, however that night he didn't skip off as rehearsed, but had to walk off stage slowly.

Watching the show from my seat I could tell something was wrong, but I doubt that others in the audience would have spotted this and thought everything was fine.

Robert said Jacob Whitehead, who had been playing Tick/Anthony helped him upstairs and to undress and put an ice pack on his foot as it had swollen up at this point.



Robert went home, after someone had been to fetch his partner as he was unable to drive, hoping it was just a sprain and by the morning he would be fine, however by 5.30am the sole of his foot was black and Simon, Robert's partner had to take him to A & E where it was quickly confirmed he had broken his 5th metatarsal.

At 10.12am, Robert rang Ashley Booker, the director of the piece to tell him the news.

At 10.52am, Robert got a call from Lisa Kendall, the society secretary, to confirm he would not be able to continue the show run, and a decision had been made that Ashley would go on in his place.

As can be imagined, Robert was devastated that after four months of dedicated rehearsals he would be unable to see the show out.

It was very fortunate that Ashley had not only directed the show but had previously performed in it twice, in the part of Bernadette and therefore knew the show inside out, plus he knew Felicia's lines.

Robert arrived at the theatre, shortly

followed by Ashley, who had taken time off work and started to prepare him for that evening's performance, which included applying hair removal cream to his body and shaving his beard.

Once Ashley had been prepared, they moved on to the stage and tried on Robert's costumes which had been tailored to fit him. Ashley had been to Primark to buy suitable items which he thought might be suitable if the costumes didn't fit or couldn't be altered.

The pair then moved to running the show, by which point Lee Caddick and Jacob, who played Bernadette and Tick had made it to the theatre where they ran the entire show. Robert said to his amazement, Ashley knew every line, every stage direction and very quickly picked up the choreography, which had been done by Joseph Hopkinson, brilliantly.

The show was very soon ready for curtain up, Robert stayed upstairs with Pete Lane, the MD, to sing with the ensemble. As Robert said, he wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere else, other than actually on the stage.

Ashley went onstage on Friday evening and Saturday matinée with Robert watching from upstairs. However, for the Saturday evening, he was offered a seat in the auditorium to sit with his friends from Crigglestone Community Theatre Company. Little did he know this had been planned in order that he could join Ashley, Lee and Jacob onstage to sing the finale number, 'Up Where We Belong'.

Robert said, despite what happened, he had an incredible time and has made some fantastic memories and experiences. He also went on to say, the friendships he has made during this show will last a lifetime, plus he will be forever grateful to Ashley for stepping into the role of Felicia.

I also spoke to Ashley Booker who had directed this piece, who told me: *"When I went backstage on Thursday evening to congratulate the cast on another spectacular performance, I saw Rob on a chair with a first aider and an ice pack on his foot,"* he went on to say, *"I was told it was sprained but a good night's rest and painkillers and all will be good."*

Skip forward 12 hours and Ashley said, *"I received a phone call from Rob, who was just out of A & E, who told me his foot was broken."*

Ashley said he contacted Lisa Kendall, the society secretary, who told him the committee had decided that with only 9 hours until curtain up, the only option was for him to take Rob's place and go on as Felicia.

Ashley said: *"With Rob's support and a quick rehearsal with Lee and Jacob (Bernadette and Tick) I agreed. I can't thank LMTC enough for the encouragement and unwavering support. I may have said the lines, sang the songs and did the steps, but I did it all for Rob."*

This is another example of community theatre at its best.

Les Smith
NODA North East
Regional Councillor



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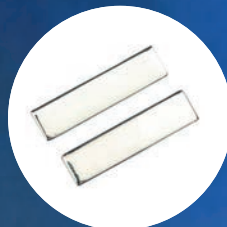
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We appreciate that some societies cannot afford, or are not allowed, due to their constitution, to purchase awards for members. Whilst the applications will need to be made by the society, the individual is able to pay for the award themselves (or 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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A youth award and certificate may be awarded from the first youth show every three years to a maximum age of 20.

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NODA Southwest's evening returns to Plymouth!

It was back to Plymouth for the Annual Night of Glitz and Glamour!

Saturday 19th May 2024, saw a return to Plymouth's Crown Plaza Hotel for NODA Southwest's Annual Awards Evening, celebrating all the very best in Amateur Theatre in the region for shows performed in 2023.

Hosted by Southwest Regional Councillor, Graham Liverton, and with NODA President, Christine Hunter-Hughes, as guest of honour, nearly 400 people from all corners of our huge region took the chance to put on their glad-rags and have a great evening together. The event had been a total sell-out far faster than ever before which had caught the organisers and a few winners unaware and the hotel were extremely helpful in providing some additional room for them.

55 awards across 25 categories were announced and presented by the NODA President - the full details of which are posted on the NODA Southwest website. Everyone present was a winner of course, as being nominated in the first place in the real achievement – with the overall winner being Amateur Theatre in the region of course! As ever, standards on stage in performance and presentation just seem to get better and better year on year.

There were just too many successes to single out, other than perhaps the Regional Councillor's Choice award to The Whilden Family, for their dedication to the Blackmore Theatre.

The awards were only part of the evening of course – there was the chance to make new like-minded friends, meet old ones, eat and drink and then to dance the night away at the disco afterwards. All this on a lovely spring evening, just a few yards from Plymouth's famous lighthouse and Hoe!

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

Matthew Heaton



The Crown Plaza, Plymouth Credit: Southwest Theatre Photography



NODA District Achievement Award winners 2023

Credit: Southwest Theatre Photography



Sidmouth Amateur Dramatic Society wins best panto!

Credit: Southwest Theatre Photography

Celebration day in the South East region

We were honoured to have our President, Christine Hunter Hughes, at the recent South East AGM and Celebration Day, held at the Electric Theatre, Guildford. Christine told us of the changes afoot within NODA at the moment to ensure that we remain relevant, visible and valued in the changing, post-covid world.

Christine thanked all SE volunteers for their sterling work and reported that she had covered 23,000 miles, visited 123 groups to date and seen many different, varied and wonderfully performed productions and was warmly welcomed by each society. She said: *"I think we have the best hobby in the world, providing as it does, friendship, camaraderie and a real sense of achievement, as you continue to entertain local audiences to such a high standard. Carry on the great work!"*

After the AGM part of the afternoon, Accolades of Excellence and regional awards were presented. There were also performances from groups including excerpts from: *Into The Woods*, *Avenue Q*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *Les Miserables* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*.



Dressed to thrill at NODA East Conference

The most dazzling fashion statements issued at the NODA East Regional Awards in April, were clearly the province of gentlemen attending the gala. Master of ceremonies, John Horley, gleamed in a maroon satin waistcoat patterned with flowers, while District 4 North Representative, Leslie Judd, released his spirit bird, a peacock, into a suit that strutted its stuff proudly. Will O'Donnell displayed his inner Elton John, topping off the look with trendy sunglasses. The truly exciting attire was offstage at this round of NODA East Awards, most would agree!



Meet the NODA Head Office Team



Dale Freeman - Chief Operating Officer

Dale joined NODA in 2006 as a sales assistant, coming from a very sales-oriented background, which made it a perfect fit for him initially. However, he soon realised that the role was not just about sales but also about providing a service to NODA's membership alongside the sales aspect. At that time, he had been on stage regularly for nearly 30 years—not as an actor, but as a musician—so he had some understanding of theatre.

Over the years, Dale's title and role changed several times, and in 2017, he was offered the position of Chief Operating Officer, which he eagerly accepted. Many changes have taken place since then, none more significant than the rebrand and launch of the new NODA in 2024. Watch this space! Please do feel free to call for a chat or drop him an email: dale@noda.org.uk



Rob Williams - Marketing and Publishing Executive

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

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



Michelle Callicott - Financial Controller

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

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



Liam Nixon - Marketing and Membership Services Assistant

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

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



Heather Knapp - Administrator/Secretary

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

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

Who's who on NODA Council

President

Christine Hunter Hughes

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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

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Vice President

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Life Member

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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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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, elect the auditors for the ensuing year and receive any other business of which due notice has been given.

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

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