

# TODAY

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A Magazine By NODA



**The Spongebob Musical**

**Everything including the  
kitchen sink**

**Spotlight heads to London**

**NODA Theatre Summer  
School 2025 courses**

**For every stage**





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# Welcome

Welcome to the new look NODA Today! Following the success of our 125th celebration edition, our national and regional editors have come together to create a jam-packed issue brimming with exciting content. Here's what you can look forward to:

Inspiring tales from across the regions, including youth group triumphs, first-time performers and fantastic local celebrations which showcase the vibrant heart of amateur theatre.

Learn how the team proudly exhibited at MusicalCon with our fresh new branding, read the wonderful stories from members who attended.

The highly anticipated NODA Theatre Summer School courses are now live! Don't miss the chance to join an incredible line-up of training and workshops. Get online and secure your spot today for an unforgettable summer of learning and creativity.

In September, we celebrated the inauguration of Graham Liverton as our new NODA President. Read about his travels so far!

As Christmas approaches, so does the magical panto season! From everyone at NODA, we wish you a successful season with brilliant performances and packed audiences.

Enjoy this edition and thank you for being a part of the NODA community!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian G. Cox". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Ian G. Cox  
Chairman of Trustees



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NODA East Midlands

# Siegfried sings Gilbert and Sullivan!

## From new patrons to guest performances on stage

Stamford Gilbert and Sullivan Players' exciting centenary show of *Ruddigore* was performed at the beautiful Stamford Corn Exchange in October this year.

*Ruddigore* was first performed in Stamford in 1924, when the late, great Sir Malcom Sargent was the society's musical director, before he went on to make his name as a renowned conductor and composer worldwide. There is a room dedicated to him in the Town Hall, which houses his baton and other significant artefacts gifted to the town by his family.

We had some great guest appearances on stage this year. The talented harmonica player, David Turner, from the popular 80's Ska band *Bad Manners*, played for us during the hornpipe and the Chairman of the Plantagenet Medieval Archery



Samuel West

and Combat Society, Dai Rees, was our Knight in his authentic suit of shining armour!

To top it all off, we are totally thrilled and honoured that multi award winning, Olivier and BAFTA nominee, actor, theatre director and narrator, Samuel West, recently agreed to become our Honorary Patron. Son of legendary actors Prunella Scales and Timothy West, and most recently starring as the enigmatic vet Siegfried Farnon in the Channel 5 remake of *All Creatures Great and Small*, many of the cast had noticed that in almost every episode of the drama series, his character Siegfried whistles, hums or sings a line from Gilbert & Sullivan.

I reached out to him and he wrote back saying he was, "happy and delighted to be approached by the Players and that "the tradition of non-professional performance in this country is one I have a lot of time for." He feels that, "singing and playing together is one of the great pleasures of life and that the thrill of being part of something bigger than ourselves can be life changing for some people."

He adds that, "the joy Gilbert and Sullivan operas still bring, to audiences and performers alike must be treasured and renewed."

The Players are proud to boast a large contingent of lively and

enthusiastic youngsters (many of whom are playing lead roles in *Ruddigore*), who I know will absolutely agree with Sam, that performing as part of a group such as ours has indeed been life changing for them. Their passion for all things Gilbert and Sullivan and the friendships they have made will keep the works of these great men alive for future generations. We are all so very proud of them and their commitment to our shows.

We are really looking forward to welcoming Sam into our G&S family and treasuring and growing our relationship with him. His presence in the audience of *Ruddigore* would be the icing on the cake!



The cast

**Ruth Palmer**  
Director

NODA North

## 'Oliver' steps up to the Strictly stage

### Rising star takes to the stage in front of 7 million viewers

Nine years ago Oliver Quinn aged 12 stepped onto the stage at the Tyne Theatre and Opera House playing his namesake Oliver, in WEOS Musical Productions performance of Lionel Bart's classic *Oliver*. Today Oliver, or Olly as he is affectionately known within WEOS, is not only part of the boy band *DearALICE* but performed with the band on *Strictly Come Dancing* in November this year in front of 7 million viewers.

In 2023, Olly applied to take part in the latest BBC One talent show, *Made in Korea: The K-pop Experience*, a reality show which was aired on the BBC in August 2024. Olly went through vigorous auditions as an individual before being put together with other band members and flown out to South Korea's capital for 100 days rigorous training as the boy band *DearALICE*.

Like many keen youngsters Olly loved performing from a very young age and appeared in many amateur and professional productions growing up. He was a member of the Chorister School in Durham for five years and a member of The National Youth Choir of Great Britain.

WEOS Chairman Ruth Barber said, "We clearly can't claim any of the success regarding Olly's rise to fame. He has worked so hard to achieve his dream, but it is wonderful to know that we may

have helped him along the way. His dream as a young boy was to become a professional and his dream has certainly come true."

Olly, now 20 years old and a recent graduate in dance and musical theatre from Laine Theatre Arts and Bird College, faces an exciting future with *DearALICE* and one to watch out for.

WEOS Musical Productions continues to support young people in all of their productions where appropriate and have worked and supported young people from the age of 5 upwards. Their recent performance of *Evita* in April 2024, saw them win in District 5, the Best Youth Ensemble, Best Individual in a Musical for 27 year old Hannah Ellis Brown's performance of Eva Peron in *Evita*, Best Musical in District 5 and Best Musical in the north region.



DearALICE  
Credit - BBC & Guy Levy



Oliver Quinn  
Credit - Adrian Jackson



Oliver Quinn  
Credit - Jeff Spicer





NODA North East

## Directing in an unusual space

### From sightlines to removable staging

**Jay Cundell Walker**  
Director

2024, was my second time directing for Skipton Musical Theatre Company in the beautifully refurbished Skipton Town Hall. After spending millions of pounds on the building, the concert hall is now fully restored with the addition of raked seating and a certain amount of lighting on the rig. The ceiling of the hall is a real thing of beauty and the venue works wonderfully for musical concerts. But the stage has been removed and replaced with deck which is adaptable,

but noisy and of course there are no wings or any spaces in which to store props or scenery. That is more challenging for a full-scale musical.

Sound familiar? I know this is the situation which many of you will face when putting on your own productions. I find that each musical needs a different approach. Last year for *Calendar Girls* we had to be very aware of 'exposure' for our brave female cast. So, we put the orchestra in

front of one side of the stage and ensured the women's modesty was preserved by performing mostly on the stage. We had a small area front of stage which saved too many scene changes and we did use a lot of entrances and exits through the audience which I always enjoy.

This year, for our production of *Oliver*, I wanted the children and ensemble to have the luxury of lots of movement space for their scenes, so we put the band on stage, then the projection screen, then a small raised area with steps down to an enormous space on the floor, which gave us a massive area for the large cast scenes. Entry and exits were mostly through the audience and every prop used had to be brought on and removed by the cast, with virtually nothing pre-set. There was no scenery whatsoever.

I wonder what next year will bring? I actually enjoy working with a flexible space and having to find new annual solutions. I'm sure you all have stories too of challenging staging. Maybe this could be a regular item- solutions I have found for difficult spaces!



NODA East

# Assassination!

## St Neots Players reveal story behind prime minister's assassin



The name "John Bellingham" probably rings few bells with the average passer-by on a British street – unless that person happens to be a historian or archaeology buff.

The historian will likely recognise the name of the only person to ever assassinate a British prime minister.

The archaeologist may know the name of the man who, when he lived, was the owner of a skull that today sits in Queen Mary's Pathology Museum, London.

But Bellingham's name may soon become more widely known through a theatrical event presented by the St Neots Players in Cambridgeshire in November. Written by longtime Players member Glenys Shaw, the presentation is based on letters written by protagonists in the story, notably Bellingham himself and Lord Granville Leveson Gower.

Bellingham was born in St Neots, and the families of both himself and his wife were local to the area. John Bellingham and his wife did not stay in St Neots, living mostly in Liverpool and London,

where he pursued a career in trading, Shaw said, *"He moved to Russia but fell into trouble with the Russian authorities and was incarcerated there for two years in a rat-infested cell where he lived on bread and water."*

*Bellingham protested his innocence, attempting to involve the British ambassador to Russia at the time, Lord Gower, amongst many other British and Russian authorities, to gain his release. He was unsuccessful. He got no help from the British government whatsoever."*

Shaw says, *"He was eventually freed and came back to this country, and nobody still took any notice when he started to talk about compensation and how his family had suffered."*

*You can feel sorry for him when you read my account of it; yes, you would say, my god, poor man. A lot of people thought, 'Poor man' ... but it was a very complicated political scenario at the time,"* Shaw says. *"Still, no one in power paid any attention to Bellingham's pleas for support and compensation. This led to his increasing bitterness and anger."*

On 11 May, 1812, Bellingham shot Perceval dead in the lobby of the House of Commons. He was tried and found guilty on 15 May 1812, and executed three days later. The punishment for his crime at the time was to be "hanged and anatomised", meaning that his body was disassembled.

Today, it is said to be the most famous item in the London pathology hospital.

Shaw says she was prompted to write the show by a young woman who felt the major population growth in St Neots, recognised as Cambridgeshire's fastest-growing town, required some insight into the area's little-known history. In partnership with the local history society, *Assassination!* was constructed. *"We're doing this together,"* Shaw says. *"I do think people like to know about their community."*

The young woman who joined Shaw to translate the tale into a performance-ready script is portraying the narrator in the production.

Liz Davies, a local historian, is to deliver historical context in a talk during the presentation. *"Liz's talk will put meat on the bones,"* Shaw says.

Being held at the United Reformed Church, the production is planned to be staged only once.

*"I hope it works,"* Shaw joked, *"I've only ever written children's plays before!"*

**DeeDee Doko**  
East Regional Editor



Feature – NODA Scotland

# Spotlight heads to London

## Scottish group chosen to perform at the National Theatre

Last year (2023), Spotlights Community Youth Theatre applied to take part in the National Theatre Connections Festival 2024. And we never imagined the crazy adventure that would ensue as a result.

Connections is the National Theatre's annual nationwide youth theatre festival. The programme is 30 years old and has a history of championing the talent of young people from across the UK. Every year, they commission ten new plays written for young people and over 250 schools and youth theatres participate. Each group take on one play, which they perform at home, then at their 'partner theatre'. The National Theatre send a mentor director to see the home show and meet with the cast to make suggestions and recommendations for transferring the show to the partner theatre.

We were given a rare musical as we are a society that performs musical theatre as well as 'straight' plays. *The Sad Club*, by Luke Barnes and Adam Pleeth, is a

series of monologues, duologues and catchy songs about young people and their mental health. It covers issues such as trying to fit in with peers, depression, school and parental pressures, peer pressure, risky behaviour and young people putting on a front to the world while internally hurting and struggling. This show resonated with our young members and they embraced it enthusiastically. Our director was a bit apprehensive though, trying to figure out how to quickly shift scenes from a swimming pool to outer space, to Australia, to 1400's Greenland, to Medieval England to a contemporary house party, etc. There were over 20 scene changes in a 55-minute show! Luckily, as part of the festival, directors must attend a training weekend in London provided by the National Theatre. While there, our director met other groups doing the same show, as well as professional directors and theatre makers and was able to find sparks of inspiration.

The defining moment was when she realised she wasn't interested

*The Sad Club* – London performance





'The Sad Club' – home performance

in creating a movement piece for the crucial swimming pool scene. Instead, a paddling pool and water represented it!! On returning from London, she shared the idea with the cast, and they loved it. From there, spotlights built a show that did not take itself seriously and planned to alienate the audience at every opportunity. The show opened with the cast setting up props and the 12 chairs that made up their set, handing out business cards saying, 'Welcome to the *Sad Club*' and asking audience members to hold a paddling pool. The opening song, '*Here We Are We Are So Happy*' ended with the cast holding their ending positions an uncomfortably long time. The cast regularly directed their lines to individual members of the audience, sometimes even sitting next to them and putting an arm round them and the show ended without any walkdown or play-off. The cast just walked into the audience.

The home performances in March, were a great success with fantastic audience feedback. The mentor director gave a helpful feedback report, which inspired a few things to work on before performing in Pitlochry Festival Theatre in April. In Pitlochry, Spotlights attended workshops with the other groups that were taking part, as well as running the

tech/dress rehearsal. Spotlights show opened the weekend of shows and it was an amazing experience performing in a professional theatre, supported by people who work in theatre. We were able to watch the other performances too, and it was interesting to see what the other groups had done with their scripts, all of which were very different to ours.

And that was that! We put away our *Sad Club* jackets, binned the leftover business cards and started looking towards our next show.

And then, in May, our director got a phone call. It was the Connections Team in London...

*"We'd like to invite your group to come to London to perform at the National Theatre!"*

To explain, as part of the Connections Festival, groups film their home performance and send it to the Connections Team. They also film the performances at the partner theatre and all the performances are watched by the team and mentor directors who select one group for each of the ten plays to go to London and perform their play. The choices are made for a variety of reasons, and it's not a competition, but it means they thought your

production was a worthwhile version of the play and worthy of being on a London stage.

Our director repeatedly said in the run-up to our performances to the cast, crew and anyone who would listen, '*We will not be going to London*'. So when she got that phone call, she was so shocked she had to pull her car over to collect herself. So began a whirlwind of rounding up the cast, completing endless forms, organising rehearsals and general low-key panic.

As we were not allowed to bring our adult band, due to only young people being allowed to perform, Colin Grant, our MD, recorded the show's music and we were able to start rehearsing with the recordings. Some of our cast were unable to come to London, so we had to recast those parts and teach those people the whole show. The National Theatre Connections Team provided a professional director, Joseph Hancock, to help us prepare for the London performance, and he was amazing. He joined us at three rehearsals and supported our director throughout the run-up to the show. He helped us argue for the cast to have radio mics, he helped us figure out how to adapt from a theatre where the audience was beside us to a theatre where the cast was on a raised stage, plus he listened to our director's ideas and enabled her to conceive even more crazy ideas and transfer them to reality. The most radical idea was for the cast to have no bows but instead suddenly vanish, leaving the audience unsure if the show had ended. The cast was amazing and loved the idea. We decided the cast would vanish at the end and when the audience started to leave, would suddenly come back on to have a party and clear the stage, telling the audience to 'go home'.

The week before the London show, our director and tech team travelled to London for a 'dry tech' without the cast. What an

experience! We had a 4-hour tech and were met by so many people for lights, sound, props, costumes, stage management etc. There were even people just to stand on stage and have lights pointed at them. One of our team was a 14-year-old, who ran the mics for the show, and the sound team were amazing, showing them respect and empowering them to run the mics on this much bigger stage. Our director's most memorable moment at that dry tech was when she was asked if she wanted a confetti cannon at the end, she replied, "*Yes, if it wasn't too much bother,*" and they said she couldn't have it right now, but if she waited 20 minutes it would be ready to go! She was fully expecting them to say she had to wait a week!

The day the school summer holidays started, Spotlights were all up early to catch the 9am train to London! It was a long trip, over 6 hours, then travelling across London to Embankment, where we were staying. We arrived at our rooms at about 4pm and immediately left again to get tea before going to the National Theatre to watch two of the other Connections shows. Well, after watching two amazing productions by other companies, we knew that we had to bring our A-game.

The next day, we gathered at 8am, only to discover that two of our cast had, of course, forgotten a key piece of costume – even after all being texted the night before leaving, to make sure they had everything! But all was ok, as the National Theatre was able to source replacements. What a day that turned out to be. On arrival, we were given the health and safety talk before being taken to a rehearsal room to get to grips with any changes we needed or nerves we had to settle. We were given certain props that we had been able to request, including two Elizabethan neck ruffs they had borrowed from the Royal Shakespeare Company! A real step up from the ones we had

made from curtain tape...

Despite having two hours in the rehearsal space, by the time we were settled, we only had the chance to run key scenes that had had cast changes before we were off for a tour of the theatre. After lunch, it was time for dress rehearsal on the actual stage! It went smoothly, all things considered, with the professionals simply fixing light and sound issues as we went. The young cast looked unfazed as we ran through all the scenes and songs, it was as if this was just another Spotlights show in Forfar.

After a light tea, it was showtime. The cast and crew all gathered one last time for a warm-up, and then it was time for everyone to take their places. Our director and mascot (10-year-old Rowan) took their seats in the auditorium. For our director, this was the first time seeing the show from the audience, as she had been the prompt for all other performances. The lights went down, and the show began. According to our director, she has never been more proud than she was watching Spotlights young people performing on the National Theatre stage. They

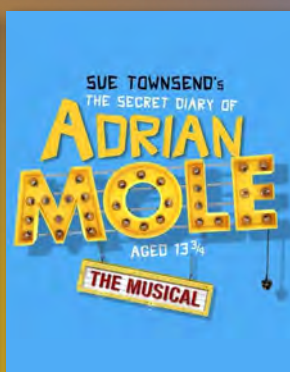
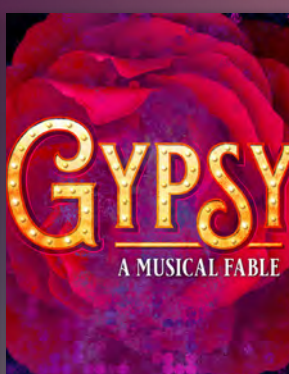
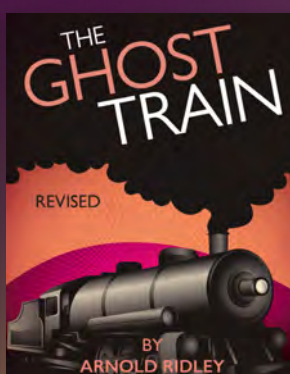
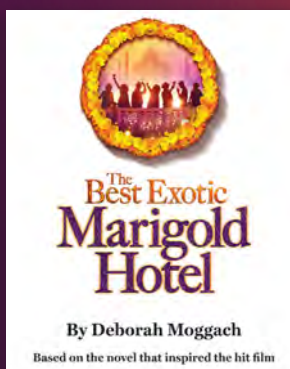
brought energy, enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism to that stage while still keeping the Spotlights character of the show. The audience laughed, sympathised, were alienated and wrong-footed throughout the show. And we were pleased that we had been able to bring a bit of Scottish humour to London. Afterwards, we discovered the playwright and composer of the show were in the audience and they met with us after the show to tell us what they thought (they loved it) and to allow us to ask any questions.

The entire experience was a once-in-a-lifetime event, and our director hasn't shut up about it since. The young people learned so much working with professionals at the National Theatre. The Connections Team were incredible at looking after us and making it the experience it was. We are now in rehearsal for next year's Connections Festival, where we will be performing the play *Fresh Air* by Vickie Donoghue. We really hope you come and see us either in Forfar in March or Pitlochry in April.



Meeting the writer and composer after the performance





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NODA South East

## First Act turns 30!



Quite an achievement for a group that began in 1994, as part of a day service offered to adults with learning difficulties from two centres on the IOW. Carol Laidlaw explains: *"Initially a course of twelve workshops were held at Shanklin Theatre by tutors from the resident rep company. This culminated in a final presentation on stage of a devised piece called 'The Ark'. The course proved so popular that First Act continued, and a further show 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' was performed, this time at the now defunct Sandown Pavilion."*

First Act's membership has risen from 12 to 50, and now runs four

full days a week. Many of its valued adult members have Down syndrome, Autism, ADHD, sensory, speech and language challenges, as well as physical challenges such as Cerebral palsy and visual impairment. The group look out for each other and forge close friendships. The inclusive company produces two bespoke annual productions performed at Shanklin Theatre which are devised and written by the creative team. Props and additional scenery are made by staff and members, costumes are made in house, and posters and programmes are designed by volunteers who work within the local print industry.

The First Act year is a full one. The first three months of the year are given over to rehearsing the spring show. April to August the group have weekly workshops run by the core tutors and guest tutors. These have included samba drumming, yoga, aerobics, musical theatre, street dance, singing and acting. We have also performed a summer showcase in July, for parents, friends and carers. The final months of the year, the group rehearse for their Christmas show.

In 2011, the NHS closed the day centres and First Act became a non-profit making social enterprise project. This means the members now have to pay out of their personal budgets. It is a much needed service on the Island and its members gain so much through being part of a vibrant theatre company run by industry professionals.

First Act has won three accolades of excellence from NODA and a community award from the local newspaper. The NODA rep reviews the shows and acknowledges the challenges the cast overcome to perform and the staff who facilitate this.

From 1994-2017, Carol Laidler (founder) continued to head up First Act, until handing over to her granddaughter Charlotte, who steered the group through the pandemic and beyond by moving the company to a larger home at the local rugby clubhouse, where they enjoy a light and spacious rehearsal room. The bi-annual productions are still performed at Shanklin Theatre with all the venue has to offer and the company, and its talented members, continue to go from strength to strength. Here's to the next 30 years, First Act!

# Have you heard about individual membership?

## Have you heard about NODA's individual membership?

For just £36 a year (or £45 for a joint membership), you can be part of something truly special!

Join our **Theatrical Services Directory** and connect with a vibrant community whether you're working, volunteering, studying in the theatre world, or simply passionate about supporting amateur theatre. From directors to chaperones, musical directors to lighting engineers, everyone is welcome here! Let's come together to connect, create, and champion our fantastic industry!

As a member, you'll also receive three copies of **NODA Today** delivered right to your door, access to the amazing **NODA Theatre Summer School**, PLUS you'll have **voting rights** at your regional AGM and the national AGM! Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity—simply visit our website to sign up!

Already an individual member – log into the NODA website and add your details to the Theatrical Services Directory!



Scan the QR code  
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**NODA**  
For every stage

NODA National Gala 2024

# Programme and Poster competition

## 2024 winners

Winner of the Thomson-Leng Trophy  
for Best Poster  
**East Cheshire Musical Theatre Company**  
**Guys and Dolls**

Runner Up and recipient of the  
Bill & Nora Timmens Trophy for Best Poster  
**Portishead Players**  
**Towards Zero**

Winner of the R T H Perkins Trophy  
for Best Programme  
**The Norbury Theatre**  
**Anything Goes**

Runner Up and recipient of the  
Ralph Whittaker Trophy for Best Programme  
**Neston Players**  
**Witness For The Prosecution**

Winner of the Owen Peacock Trophy  
for Best Programme  
**Tavistock Musical Theatre Company**  
**The Wind in the Willows**

Runner Up and recipient of the  
Ralph Whittaker Trophy for Best Programme  
**Carlton Operatic Society**  
**Kinky Boots**

Winner of the Barnes Trophy  
for Best Programme  
**The Playhouse Theatre**  
**This Happy Breed**

Runner Up and recipient of the  
Ralph Whittaker Trophy for Best Programme  
**Oldbury Rep**  
**Frankenstein, A Monster In Paris**

## Thinking of entering the competition?

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

Each region holds their own competition, using the criteria set out below, with the winning entries then put forward to the national competition. Trophies for the winners and runners up of the national competition are currently then awarded at the NODA Annual General Meeting.

Please note for the remainder of 2024, the new logo and introduction box can be used (sample on right), the 'Be inspired by amateur theatre' logo and NODA Introduction block can also be used but will no longer be available for download.



**Scan the QR code to  
download the full  
competition rules and  
logos**

Whether you are staging a musical, an opera, a play, a concert or a pantomime, as the UK's leading amateur theatre membership organisation, NODA is here for every show, every rehearsal, every curtain call – here for our members every step of the way.

From just starting out to centre stage; village halls to professional venues; NODA exists to celebrate, connect, support and amplify amateur theatre and theatre groups across the UK.

We provide invaluable services, expertise and resources which help thousands of our member groups create and produce theatre that enhances lives and benefits communities everywhere.

Whatever your passion, level of experience or stage of life, we are here to help everyone enjoy the unique benefits, opportunities and sense of community that live performance can bring.

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Credit One Imagery Photography

NODA North

## The Dolly Mixtures

# When the person you are playing is sat in the auditorium!

It is rare that an amateur theatre cast gets the opportunity to meet the people they are portraying. However, for the cast of *The Dolly Mixtures*, it was a joy they got to experience when Hilda Joyce and Betty Dickinson, members of the original *Dolly Mixtures*, arrived on opening night of the musical production.

Written by the famous Jarrow-born musician John Miles and playwright/lyricist Tom Kelly, the true story of the *Dolly Mixtures* is one based on the lives of eight courageous women, one of whom, in 1972, lost her husband to cancer at only 38 years old. The group of women formed a concert party called *The Dolly Mixtures* and travelled all over the male-dominated North-East working men's clubs (no mean feat in those days) performing comedy sketches, singing and dancing. What was even more

remarkable than their courage, was that every single penny they made from their hard-earned bookings across two decades, totalling over £100,000 (which in today's money is over a million pounds) was given to cancer research and other charities.

The musical production of *The Dolly Mixtures* is a tribute to these wonderful ladies. The show saw its inaugural production in 2017, and as a member of the audience, Enid Bilton-Gale made the almost immediate decision that she would direct it. Knowing it would be difficult to attract an audience for the show, as so few people had heard of it, Enid set out to produce the show with experienced amateur performers from several amateur groups stretching across the whole North-East.

In January 2024, Enid decided

to make her dream come true, forming an amateur theatre group called STARZ Theatre Company. The cast and production team were quickly formed and Enid set about putting the show together, rehearsing in the concert rooms of the same labour clubs that the original dollys had performed in years ago and devoting her spare time to making the costumes and scenery. The cramped, intimate City Theatre in Durham City was booked, providing an ideal performance venue which mimicked the clubs the original girls performed in.

The production was a great success, thoroughly entertaining its audiences each night and producing tears of both laughter and sadness. It was very special indeed to have two of the original *Dolly Mixture* members present, and Hilda and Betty had a wonderful, special evening in return.



The original Dolly Mixtures – Hilda & Betty

NODA North West

# Turnpike Community Theatre

## Celebrating 40 years!

As Turnpike Community Theatre marks its 40 year milestone in producing live theatre in the heart of Leigh, it's a perfect time to reflect on our rich history, memorable performances and enduring impact on the local arts scene.

Turnpike emerged from a vision to create a large scale community arts event in the local area and in turn a legacy of accessible performing arts for everyone in Leigh and its surrounding areas. Over the past four decades, it has evolved into a thriving community institution, nurturing budding actors, directors, playwrights and technicians.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Turnpike Community Theatre is its diverse repertoire of performances. We have consistently sought to support the work of local artists and budding performers. This included classic dramas to contemporary comedies, musicals and thought provoking original work.

The dedication of volunteers and the professionalism of the casts and crews have consistently elevated each show, making theatre accessible and engaging for all.

Looking back over the years, there are numerous stand out performances that have defined Turnpike Community Theatre. Their inaugural production of *Twice Around The Turnpike* was a large scale production with a cast of over 100 and many supporting

from the wings. They engaged with schools, professionals and many local performers. They have since performed in many local venues and another standout production was their Millennium production, in which they received funding from the National Lottery and the Arts Council, and was performed at Hindley Young Offender's Institution.

The theatre has been a launch pad for aspiring actors and actresses, some of who have gone on to pursue successful careers in performing arts. As Turnpike celebrates its 40th anniversary, the future looks bright. Their commitment to fostering creativity and celebrating diversity remains unwavering. With continued support from volunteers, sponsors and the local community, the group is poised to embark on its next chapter – introducing new voices and stories to the stage.

It is an exciting time to see how the group grows and flourishes as it enters its fifth decade.



A Christmas Carol 1987



Jack and the Beanstalk 2012



The Wizard of Oz 2019. Photo Credit Stephen Lee Photography



# Long Service Awards

## Celebrate your service with a long service award

First introduced back in 1930, the NODA Long Service Awards have become the 'must-have' item for members.

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

Visit our website to see the full range of awards along with pricing.

### How do I apply?

If you are a member of a group, the group 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 qualifies as 'service'?

The awards are intended for those who, week after week, attend rehearsals or spend many hours backstage, or on administrative work, and whose services are essential/indispensable to putting on shows.

### When does my service start?

Service starts from your first amateur/school show and from any age.

### I have had several years out, how do I work out my service?

Your service does not have to be continuous, but you can only include the years you have been active. The only exception to this rule is the years your group were not active due to COVID-19.

### I have performed with other groups, do those years count?

As long as your current group is a member of NODA or you are an individual member of NODA, you can include your service with another group as long as your current group is happy to confirm that service on your application form.





**5 year badge**



**10 year badge**



**15 year badge**



**20 year badge**



**25 year badge**



**30 year badge**



**35 year badge**



**40 year badge**



**45 year badge**



**50 year badge**



**60 year badge**



**25 year medal**



**Silver bar**



**50 year medal**



**Gold bar**



**60 year diamond bar**



**55 year pin**



**60 year pin**



**65 year pin**



**70 year pin**



**Individual member**



**Youth award**



**Commendation award**



**Group Life Member**



**NODA Achievement Award**

**Order your awards online at [noda.org.uk/awards](https://noda.org.uk/awards)**

NODA South West

# Bath Gilbert & Sullivan Society

## 80th celebrations!

By early 1944, as the war began to turn in the Allies' favour, optimism grew, reflected by an advertisement in the Bath local press in April announcing the formation of a "Bath Savoyard Society" for Gilbert & Sullivan enthusiasts. The society was formally established on September 6th, and held its first meeting two weeks later, featuring a reading of *The Gondoliers* with gramophone records—a pattern that continued for its initial years.

On April 1st, 1945, the society affiliated with the national Gilbert & Sullivan Society, though it nearly dissolved before its inception due to resignations from three committee members and the struggle to find replacements (some things never change!). Recordings gradually transitioned to live performances, with the first public concert performance occurring in April 1965, an unconventional choice of *The Rose of Persia*, and for many years, the society primarily functioned as an appreciation group.

In 1986, the society staged a full production of *Patience* at Bath's College Theatre, causing some members to worry that this shift would alter the society's essence. Hindsight reveals they were partially right—it changed, but it also thrived. Subsequent sell-out performances of *Iolanthe* and *The Mikado* established

a pattern of one staged G&S work and one "concert version," occasionally featuring works by their contemporaries.

A move to the Mission Theatre in late 2017, allowed the society to reimagine G&S for a more intimate venue. A WWII reimagining of *The Yeomen of the Guard* launched this new approach, earning the society its first NODA Award. A steam-punk *Pirates* followed and the rescheduling enabled festive touches in subsequent shows, such as *Iolanthe* featuring a Christmas tree fairy. The 2022, production of *The Gondoliers* garnered the society its second NODA award for Best G&S. Remarkably, only one year's show was lost to COVID, although the challenges of rehearsing *The*

*Sorcerer* in 2021, with restrictions limiting chorus sizes, now seem amusing.

In June, members and friends gathered at the Bath Mill to celebrate eight decades of the society, reminiscing over a post-dinner Zoom presentation from Joy Joseph, its longest-standing life member. She shared how she and her late husband, Tony, began their G&S journey in 1969, forging lifelong friendships and enriching the society's narrative. Currently, rehearsals for *Ruddigore* are underway for December, with plans for *HMS Pinafore* and *Trial by Jury* in 2025. I am sure that those who first met in the Little Theatre Café in 1944, would likely offer their successors a hearty "Well done!"



80th anniversary dinner



# The Spongebob Musical

## So how do you tackle it?



When BATS Next Gen decided to put on *The Spongebob Musical* we were facing a massive challenge. It had not been done before in the area and it's a huge underwater spectacle. Breaking down what needed to be done was decided the best way to tackle it.

Costume requirements were big and a set didn't exist for the show in the UK. The cost of special effects and lighting could be astronomical; a financial risk since the show has not been performed before locally. There was also the complicated choreography and singing requirements.

Director, Owen White, assembled a team of experts. Lighting designer, Myles Waugh-Bacchus, used the Broadway show as his inspiration and created a custom lighting rig. Neon flowers were a challenge, being too heavy for the existing theatre rig. Myles created them using lightweight hula hoops. This show had the most lights we've ever used. It paid off as it lit the stage perfectly. Owen found an American set as his inspiration. Working with Scenery Solutions, a set was created with

one specific requirement – it must have a slide! On different levels it was built using steel decking and dressed with flats, designed by Tori, who painted them with iconic SpongeBob images. Finishing touches came via recycled and repurposed items from a local charity and our own homes to 'clean up the ocean' helping us to create Bikini Bottom.

The costumes budget is always small. We usually source from our own supplies, from our adult sister company BATS, from charity shops and by making them. But this time we should look at hiring professional ones and D Smith Design came up with the perfect solution- a full set of costumes which would be tailored to our young cast. This raised our usual budget. With fundraising and two donations from local charities – Four Lanes Trust and The Belgae Trust – we did the show justice. Wigs and make up were provided from people with the necessary skills to do this.

Sound was another area which needed some creative thinking. With an enormous number

of sound effects in the show, our sound engineer created a separate sound effect rig, controlled with a gaming controller. This was a show of massive proportions and a huge team pulled together to make it look seamless. Due to the complicated musical and dance numbers, there were two choreographers and two dance captains as well as Tori the MD to manage it all and there were constant revisions to keep the cast step perfect! To support the cast vocally during some of the huge dance numbers, we created an alumni.

The risk assessment was huge; dancers on roller skates, a slide, ladder on the set and two huge moving staircases. Fortunately, Owen had experience working on an underwater theme along with movement on wheels and the result was slick, bright, funny and feelgood throughout. We learnt a huge amount and for our cast it was an unforgettable experience. And was it worth it... 100% yes!"

**Fiona Morgans**  
BATS Next Gen Chair





## Presidential travels with the chain

The new NODA National President starts his journey round the UK

Since becoming national president, my wife Ann and I have hit the ground running!

Wherever we go, we have been warmly welcomed and everyone is very hospitable. It just shows that NODA is one big family, all with great enjoyment for the theatre.

The first week of my presidency, we travelled from Devon, where we live, to Sutton Coldfield, to Bolton, then onto Newcastle. We then moved onto Glasgow, back to Bolton and onto Worcester and

its been like that ever since!

Our first regional conference of the year was in Scotland, at the amazing Peebles Hydro - certainly a weekend to remember.

We have seen some fantastic shows over the first month and a half and, at the time of writing this, we are off to Manchester tomorrow, then Crew, Durham and Hartlepool to see two more shows!

The time is going so quickly! But we are enjoying every minute

of it. To see so many different places, theatres and village halls is wonderful.

Please keep the invitations coming as we want to bring NODA to you in your area by visiting as many productions as possible! To those that we have seen, I want to say a big thank you. It's just so good that you are all part of NODA.

**Graham K. Liverton**  
National President





Caprian Theatre Company – *Addams Family*



Wayfarers – *Dorian Gray*



HATS – *70th Anniversary*



WAOS Workington – *Hunchback of Notre Dame*



Minerva Club – *Sister Act*



WODS – *Sister Act*



St David's Players – *Yeoman of the Guard*

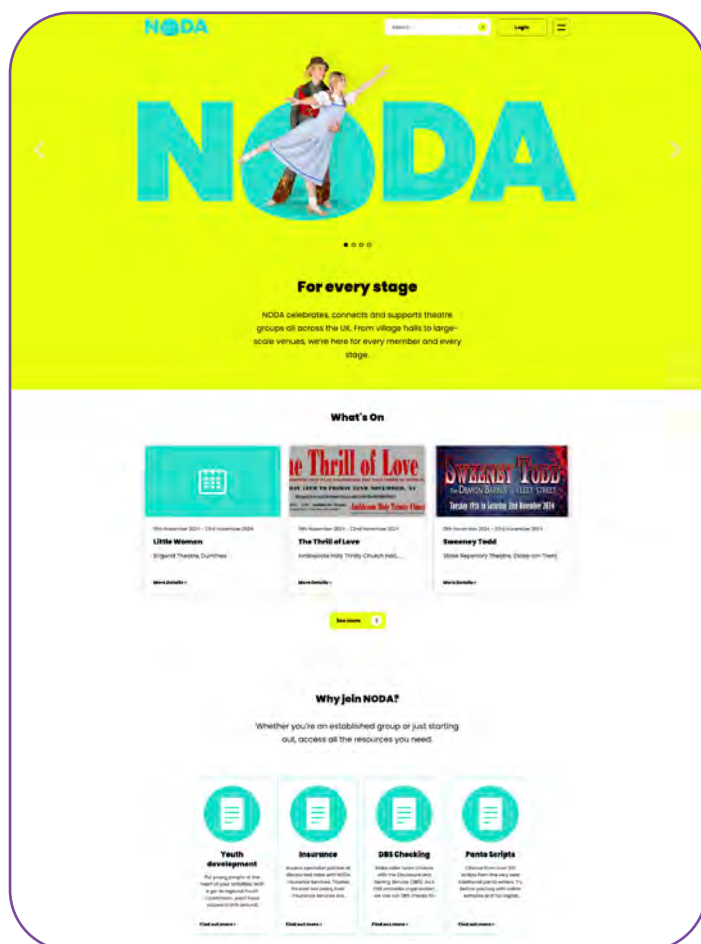


Felling Stage Society – *Wedding Singer*



## Training and support

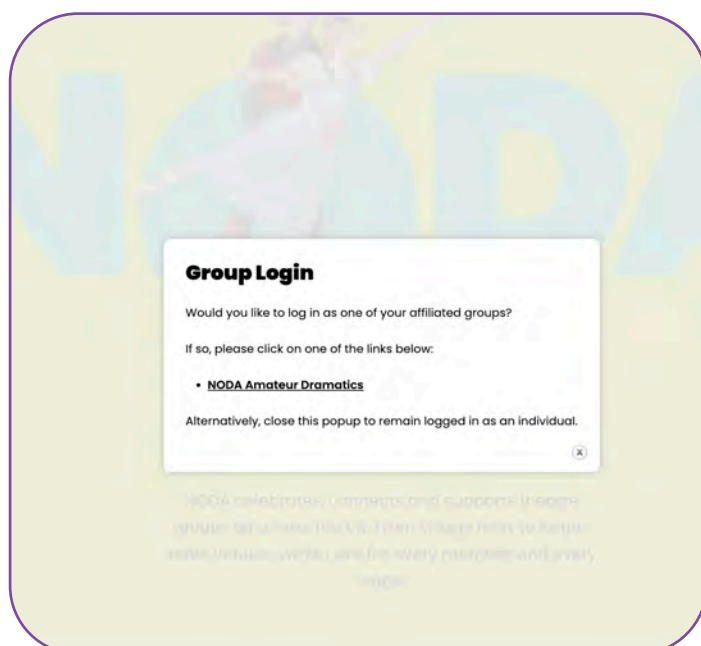
# Getting around the new NODA website



The new NODA website launched in September this year, and we have been listening to feedback and made some tweaks along the way.

The website has been built to allow different types of users to find all the information they need. From current members accessing online resources, to potential new members finding out about NODA membership, to potential audience members to your productions and to potential new recruits to your groups.

You can access the online edition of NODA Today, see all the upcoming shows in your area and read show reports from your latest productions.



By creating an online login (or logging in if you already have an account with us), you will have access to more information.

When you have logged into the NODA website, if you are already linked to your group's account, you will get a prompt onscreen to log in as your group.

If you are wanting to access any of our member benefits, online resources or membership renewals, then click on your group name.

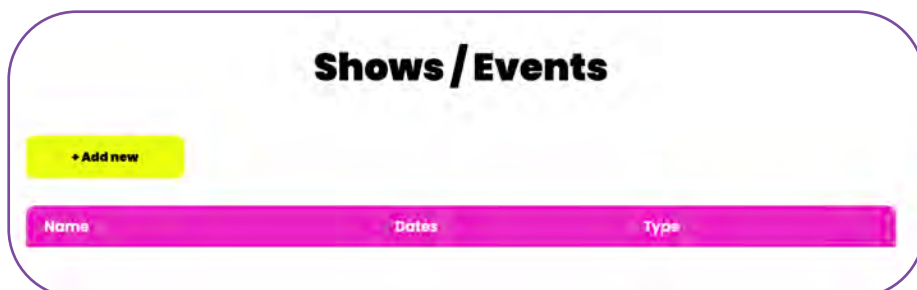
If you are wanting to update your own details, book onto an event, like the NODA Theatre Summer School or our National Celebration and AGM Weekend, then just click the little **x** in the bottom corner.





Once logged in as your group, you can click the two lines in the top right hand corner to access **My NODA**. From there you can access all of our online resources (formally known as factsheets), your groups orders, shows and events and membership information.

More in depth information can be found here for DBS checks, ordering Long Service Awards and accessing the Theatrical Services Directory.



When you are logged in as your group, from the menu, simply click **Shows/Events** to add your groups next show, event or audition to the NODA website. You can add images, box office links and event information.



In March next year, to renew your group's membership online, from the menu, simply click **My Membership** and then **Click here to renew**. You will receive an invoice for your records and you can still renew this way if you pay by cheque or BACS!

## Updating group's contact details

Whether you are new to the role or having a reshuffle, the best way to update your group's contact details with NODA is:

1. Create an online account on our website. When you complete the form, you will receive an email with a link – click that link. We cannot do anything with the account until you do.
2. Email **info@noda.org.uk** – in your email let us know who you are and your group name as well as the role you are taking over. We will then remove the previous person, if there is someone listed, and add you. We currently limit the groups to 4 online logins – chair, secretary, treasurer and a 'webmaster' (this is for someone like the safeguarding officer or health and safety to access resources).
3. That is it! After that you will be able to access all of the members' content on the website.

NODAYouth – North East

## Come to the Cabaret!

# Workshop with Sally Frith in NODA North East



Ellesmere Musical Theatre Company were delighted to host a West End themed Musical Theatre Workshop in March with Sheffield's own Sally Frith.

Prior to her professional career Sally trained locally at Constance Grants. More recently Sally played Frenchie and understudied Sally Bowles, in the original cast of the hit production of *Cabaret*, at the Kit Kat Klub at the Playhouse Theatre in London. Prior to that she performed in *Cats*, *Legally Blonde* and *Mamma Mia!* to name but a few.

The opportunity to learn more about acting through movement was also a big draw. The workshop promised three hours of tuition plus the chance to learn a routine designed for all abilities, but attendees were treated to so much more.

Sally brought along Mason Alexander Park, who made their West End debut when they played the Emcee in *Cabaret* at the Playhouse Theatre. Everyone had the chance to perform with Mason as the routine was created. The movement focused on performing "Willkommen", which sets the scene in the opening of the production as the Emcee is addressing the audience in the Kit Kat Klub, whilst also addressing the real audience. The group which included many members of NODA Youth, from both the North East and neighbouring regions, had the wonderful experience of getting to understand how the choreography was created for the actual show and how the West End Directors offered lots of creative freedom to support the cast to originate the production.

Sally also explained that the production is set 'in the round' which allows the performers to see the audience's reaction.

During a break in the workshop both Sally and Mason kindly held a Q & A session and everyone was thrilled to hear more about their experiences, particularly working on *Cabaret*. Key messages shared included:

- reminders on how tough the industry is
- how important it is to find and focus on the positives
- for performers to 'be themselves'.

The workshop concluded with a final 'performance' and photo opportunities. It really was a wonderful experience and a great chance for young NODA members to learn more about the work needed to be a professional success. Those of us who 'boxed away' our West End dreams decades ago simply had the most wonderful afternoon dancing, singing and hearing about life for professional performers.

I'll leave the final word to Sally and Mason who advised those interested in performing professionally and on the amateur stage to "*be in tune with your skill set and understand what you bring to the stage.*"

### Jo Sykes

Youth Co-ordinator, NODA North East



# Now available to perform

## *The Unfriend*

by Steven Moffat

Cast: 3f 4m

Peter and Debbie befriend Elsa: a lusty, Trump-loving widow from Denver, USA. When Elsa invites herself to stay, they look her up online and discover they are in deadly danger. But how do you protect all that you love from mortal peril without seeming, well, a bit impolite?

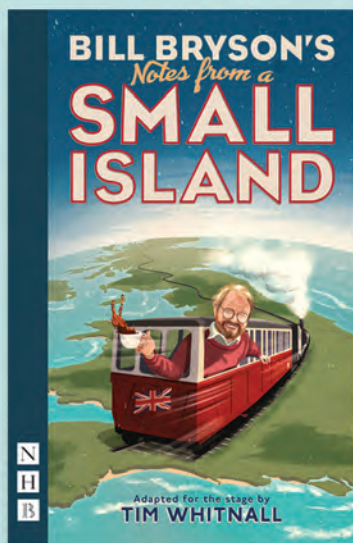
This hilarious satire about middle-class England, from the writer of *Sherlock* and *Doctor Who*, enjoyed two massively successful runs in London's West End.

*'Effortlessly entertaining' Telegraph*

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THE Unfriend

Steven Moffat



Cast: 3f 4m doubling; large cast is possible (80+ characters)  
A hilarious adaptation of Bill Bryson's smash-hit travelogue.



Cast: 3-5f 6-7m plus extras  
The West End hit comedy about the Queen Mother and her most loyal, most outrageous servant.



Cast: 3-6f 3-6m plus 1 goat (real or otherwise)  
A witty reimagining of a television classic, with a wellyful of laughs.

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NODA North

## From ancestor to director

### Where will her future take her?



Credit One Imagery Photography

Caisley Graham joined Chester-le-Street Theatre Group in 2014, aged ten, as an ancestor in their production of *The Addams Family*. Her love of performing and musical theatre was then born! Caisley stayed with the group for seventeen productions performing many ensemble and principal roles, as well as assisting with painting scenery/sets and make-up.

When the group returned after

Covid, Caisley found herself as the oldest, junior female so became 'Head Girl' for the Junior Section. In 2022, she decided to enter the first ever 'Star of Musical Con' competition at the Excel in London. She made it through to the final eight and sang on the main stage wearing a 'Catherine of Aragon' costume she had painstakingly made herself. She did not win, but the experience itself was amazing.

Following her graduation from the Junior Section in 2023, she headed for pastures new, where she commenced a 3-year BA (Hons) course in Musical Theatre at LMA London. As if that wasn't enough, Caisley then approached CLSTG's committee with a request to stage and direct *SIX: Teen Edition*. Having gained committee approval, her next project commenced!

Auditions and casting for six Queens and a swing took place in December 2023, when Caisley came home for Christmas. The challenge then began, as both cast and production team were scattered across the country, so a new way of rehearsing was introduced! Script rehearsals were done weekly via WhatsApp calls and Caisley worked with the choreographer via emails and video. A few in-person dance rehearsals were slotted in when they were at home until finally, in June this year, the girls were all located in the same place! Intensive rehearsals started, with some long eight-hour sessions taking place.

The production of *SIX* was finally staged in August this year, to two sold-out audiences. Caisley not only directed the show, but also made/alterd the costumes and played the role of Jane Seymour.

Caisley has certainly crammed a lot into her years with the group and has much to be proud of. We cannot wait to see where her future takes her!

NODA South West

# Maturity is no ban to learning

## Looking back on the last 50 years

My name is Sandra Stewart, and for over 50 years, I've been fortunate to call the Manor Pavilion Theatre in Sidmouth my artistic home. My acting career began in 1970, on that very stage, and I've been privileged to continue performing there ever since.

I joined the Sidmouth Dramatic Society and my very first part was in R.F. Delderfield's final play, *The Key of the Hut*, which premièred at the Manor Pavilion. Being part of such a landmark production was both exhilarating and nerve-wracking, but it was the beginning of my lifelong love affair with this theatre.

After those early years, I spent three wonderful summers with The Mercury Players, London Repertory, which came to Sidmouth every summer from the mid-sixties and eventually a short stint with Charles Vance Repertory in later years.

Throughout, Sidmouth Dramatic Society has given me the chance to step into roles ranging from Oscar Wilde's witty heroines to Noël Coward's sharp-tongued characters.

In my more mature years, I joined Sidmouth Musical Theatre. Transitioning to musicals was both an exhilarating and humbling experience—especially as an actress who can hold a tune but wouldn't call herself a singer. The effort it took to blend acting with song was intense, but the reward was greater than I ever imagined. Musical theatre



became an extra string to my bow, and I encourage every actor to give it a try!

This year, Sidmouth Musical Theatre had the incredible honour of winning Best Musical in a Small Theatre for our production of *My Fair Lady*, in which I was fortunate enough to play Mrs. Higgins. We are so blessed in East Devon to have a theatre as dedicated and vibrant as the Manor Pavilion.

As I look back on my time in theatre, I'm grateful for every role, from heavy drama to comedy and every stage that has helped me grow as a performer.

To anyone thinking of trying something new, especially later in life, know that maturity is no ban to learning a new area of theatre.

It's been an incredible journey, and I feel immensely lucky to have shared it with such a passionate theatre community. 2025 will be another exciting year as we are performing *Oklahoma!* a real classic and was the late Queen Elizabeth II very favourite musical.



NODA North West

# The Toxic Avenger

## Taking that first step



I'm Christopher King, I'm 35, and I've never done an amateur stage musical before.....ever.

Well, I hadn't done an amateur stage musical until Monday 9th September 2024, when I took the stage at Chorley Theatre in the opening night of CADOS's production of *The Toxic Avenger*.

I imagine most people reading this in NODA Today are experienced performers who have been around the theatre scene for a long time. Or maybe you're actually a budding young performer who's done some school and youth productions. Either way, I invite you to take a moment to cast your mind back (some maybe further than others!) to that moment right before you stepped out on stage in front of a live audience for the first time.

Perhaps, like me, you were a crazy bunch of mixed emotions, nervous energy, pure adrenaline, with a nasty case of stomach nausea and the insane but persistent thought that this must all be a dream or some terrible

mistake. You couldn't actually be about to step, or in my case run, out from the wing into a spotlight and belt your first line of the opening number "*I will save New Jersey!*" right? No, that would be total madness, surely....

But I'm getting ahead of myself. The reason I'm writing this article today is because I've come to understand, in my short time learning the ropes of dramatic societies and putting on a musical, that finding men who are willing to not only be on stage, but also, sing on stage is a challenge that a number of societies face. I'm not going to make any comment about singing well on stage here, a) because that can be somewhat taught to those who are willing, and b) because close friends of mine assured me that I was at least the 5th best singer in *Toxic Avenger's* cast of 5, so there you go...

So, being a man of a certain age, I believe I'm well placed to shed some light on why wrangling those of us who are not already theatre people into your shows can be such a struggle.

### Embarrassment

Genuinely, this is the biggest one. I've written down in my notes words like "ego", "fear", "judgement", "not being manly", and they all fall under the heading of us basically being too embarrassed to put ourselves out there in a way we never have before. Will our friends and family laugh at us? Will they never look at us the same way again? Am I going to be mocked about this mercilessly until the end of time in the way that good friends never let you forget?!

By contrast, the most embarrassing thing for me to do was to take on the character of Melvin, a nerdy loser who's desperately pining for the pretty blind librarian (played brilliantly and hilariously by Orna Murphy-Horton), and a short moment in the opening number where I was required to do some, erm, nervous... thrusting.

I'm no armchair psychologist, but when I was asked to do said 'thrusting' and please note the entire cast were also doing similar



motions so I wasn't alone, or even the main focus at this moment, it's like a part of my brain closed down, shut the doors and locked them for good measure. I couldn't do that, on stage, in front of actual people, in front of my friends and family on some nights, it would be so... embarrassing! But even in front of my 4 cast mates, and members of the production team and crew, all of whom I'd gotten to know really well over the months of rehearsals and preparation, I was struggling to let go of the innate fear of being embarrassed.

### Singing

This one is, of course, very specific to musicals. And it's also a subset of the embarrassment reason from above, but it does deserve it's own little explanation.

Most non-theatre guys don't like singing anywhere that isn't a football stadium or a drunken

night out. They will only sing when it is with at least a dozen other people, and when they are not the focus of people's attention.

Lastly, singing high notes. If you do achieve the impossible and actually get a man to sing he will be searching around for the lower part of his register because that's 'manly' (grrr, etc). Johnny Cash is a good entry point for singing in general because his songs are often in the sweet spot for uncertain male singers, and songs about whisky and the like are not embarrassing either.

I joined the Chorley-based KTB Musical Theatre Chorus last year and immediately joined the basses for similar reasons. However, when it came to auditioning and performing in *Toxic Avenger*, I suddenly needed to hit tenor notes, treble clef music, what the heck?

### Conclusion

I learnt so much doing the *Toxic Avenger* and my gratitude to everyone involved is truly immeasurable. It was extremely fortunate for me to work with such a great group of talented and experienced folks in my first ever show. The level of my cast mates singing, acting, comedy chops, and dance ability had me in awe, and they dragged me up to a performance of which I think I can be proud too.

It may sound like I am being dramatic here, which I'm guessing drama people are used to, but I am completely serious when I say the experience has changed my life. It's an experience I want others to have too if possible and, selfishly, I'm dying to experience it again and again. Consider me officially hooked on performing.

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We caught up with Christopher Bryan (@christopher.cosplay) after he came second in the Musical Con Cosplay Competition this year!

### How long have you been involved in amateur theatre?

I have taken part in professional and amateur theatre back in New Zealand as a member of AMT (Auckland Musical Theatre), but before this year my last musical was over 12 years ago. I got involved this year again after quite some time away from the stage in *Seussical* with Bros Theatre Company taking up a role as one of the mischievous Wickersham Brothers and had an absolute blast. It has been fantastic to get involved with the world again and i've been so creatively fulfilled. It is excellent to be a part of a community again especially one so welcoming and friendly.

### What made you first join an amateur theatre group?

I've been in London almost 9 years now and I was itching to do something creative again with my time. I had started following NODA to see notifications of auditions within the Greater London area, but by chance, I ran into a friend on the tube who was just coming back from auditions for *Seussical*, so when the opportunity came up I jumped at the chance to be a part of a show again. I emailed the producers as soon as I got home and had a couple of days of preparation to hit my audition two days later.

### Which amateur theatre groups have you been a part of?

In London I've been a member of Bros Theatre Company.

### What is the favourite role you have played and, or what, musical role have you always dreamed of playing?

My favourite role I've played has been Melchior in *Spring*

Main feature – Musical Con 2024

## Everything including the kitchen rug!

## Taking to the MusicalCon Cosplay stage



*Awakening* but i've also had a lot of fun as Billy in *Anything Goes*.

**Your journey to MusicalCon, what inspired you to get involved with the competition?**

I've always been a fan of elaborate costumes and I admire the eye for design that goes into each costume. My husband is quite a dab hand with cosplay. I've had to increase my skills to match his intricate costumes each year and was the first year winner! (Red Death - *Phantom of the Opera*). Last year, I created a Technicolour Dreamcoat that I entered in the Cosplay Competition at Musical Con that landed me in the final but I did not place. So this year I was determined to outstrip my effort from last year and building Scar has used so many different skills from photoshop, sewing, moulding, painting, foam modelling and working with bamboo and fishing wire! My husband was not too pleased to find me cutting up our kitchen rug to create my tail...



Credit - Musical Con

**How was your experience being a featured part of the weekend?**

It was a fantastic weekend and everyone was so welcoming and lovely. It was great to be around like-minded people who have such a fierce love for musical theatre. The reception to my Scar costume in particular has been overwhelming. I was ecstatic to hit runner-up in the Cosplay Competition and have the opportunity to speak about the process of making my outfit.

**Last question, did you visit the NODA stand - what did you think?**

Yes, the NODA stand was incredible, a great opportunity to see costumes from other productions and speak to people heavily involved in the wider community. Having a wonderfully lit photo stand was also a bonus.



Seussical - BROS Theatre Company. Credit - Louise Ellard-Turnbull



NODA East

## Moving houses

# Hello and goodbye with *Twelfth Night*, and opening new doors

This is a story about moving houses.

It's also about a theatre company whose first production in its new home, after 65 years at their previous premises, will be *Twelfth Night* in June 2025. It's also about a theatre group whose last production in their home of 71 years was *Twelfth Night*.

But first:

Moving house is one of life's biggest stresses.

It's bad enough when you've lived for only a few years in a property but imagine moving after 65 years, or 71 years! Well, most people would say they'd rather not!

However, two theatre groups in the East Region have recently found themselves in the unenviable position of having to make such moves from premises they used for 71 and 65 years respectively. The Harlow, Essex-based MHP Theatre Company, previously known as the Moot House Players, had occupied the eponymous Moot House since 1953. They stored their set flats there, their stage furniture and props, as well as performing there and, possibly the most valuable benefit of all, using the house for rehearsals as part of their agreement. Their last production at Moot House, in 2023, was *Twelfth Night*. The

award-winning Cambridgeshire theatre company known as Shakespeare at the George (SATG) had performed in the open-air courtyard at the George Hotel, a traditional coaching inn in Huntingdon, every summer since 1959. In summer 2024, the owners of the George, the Greene King brewing company, advised SATG that the group would no longer have hold of its traditional two-week run in the courtyard during the summer, meaning that their 2025 production of *Twelfth Night* would have to be staged elsewhere.

In MHP's case, the owners of Moot House had found in the wake of the Covid crisis that they needed to earn more revenue and become ever more cost-effective to run than before, with greater focus on the venue's primary use as a wedding and special events setting. The new prices and proposed new financial and usage arrangements were more than the MHPs could afford. So, the group's board decided the amateur theatrical troupe should move.

Former board member Peter Yates remembers the facility fondly: *"It was a proper theatre with the proscenium, the curtains, the lights and everything else. We had our own rehearsal space and we could take that at any time and have it as long as we wished. And of course, over the years, you end up building and storing, and*

*so the property at Moot House gave us the wonderful situation where whatever props and sets we were building, we stored them at the theatre."*

Finding new premises was one challenge, but they realised that most props and sets could not come with them. Subsequently, all but a few rugs and furniture were cast aside, discarded or donated to other organisations. Charity groups were invited to see their last show and chose pieces from it that they wanted to sell in their shops. A 1920's gramophone that Yates had refurbished and rebuilt into working order appeared in the production and was snapped up by a local charity, which then sold the piece for several hundred pounds. *"It was a win-win,"* Yates recalls. *"The only issue is, every time you want to put a production on, you've got to go out and source the props. It's a different way of thinking."*



Mike Rees – MHP

The question of where to perform was resolved more easily. The group now performs at the Harlow Playhouse, where MHP had had some *"associations in different ways,"* says Mike Rees, current chairman. *"Though we have to pay for rehearsal space and so on, they go out of their way to help us out when they can. It's actually been very good."*

MHP benefits in increased audiences by staging their productions in Harlow's leading entertainment venue and having their plays marketed by the Playhouse. The group has two performance slots at the Playhouse in May and November 2025, as well as working with other organisations such as the British Legion on projects such as providing entertainment for their Remembrance Day events. Ticket prices to MHP shows have had to increase by about £2 per person in line with their new performance venue. But the future for MHP is bright, Rees says, with performing at the Playhouse *"a springboard to other things. You know, doors open and doors close and we will evolve. Who knows, in the next years to come, we might be doing three or four shows a year."*

### From a coaching inn to a palace

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade, is the sage advice offered when you're handed bad news but then have the opportunity to turn the situation around into something fabulous. And that's what the group previously known as Shakespeare at the George did when they found they'd have to relocate its annual Shakespeare production elsewhere. After receiving a fair few offers of new premises, the members of the SATG Trust chose a complex of buildings dating back to the 11th century and a previous home of the Bishops of Lincoln, with connections to King Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon. Complete with knot garden that could

and a flagstone area that could be used as a stage. Buckden Towers belongs to the Claretian Missionaries where it is used as a retreat and a conference centre. Enter Shakespeare at the Towers, the new name of the theatrical collective and charitable trust. In addition to the benefit of what SATT Trust chair Reuben Milne describes as *"a more collaborative relationship"* with their new landlords, productions will gain from significantly more car park space for audiences, increased space for wheelchairs, and opportunity for both parties to explore expanded community reach, although the Towers are just four miles from the previous site at the George.

In a prepared statement, Fr. Paul Smyth, director of the Claret Centre at Buckden Towers, said, *"Our hope is that the partnership*

*will help bring people together and enrich their lives through a shared historical experience of seeing Shakespeare's work performed within such an authentic and culturally significant environment."*

One dilemma facing SATT in advance of its next show in 2025, is relative lack of proximity to public transport. However, Milne said that resolving that issue, either by working with public transport authorities or by arranging transportation themselves, while a work in progress does not pose a barrier to moving ahead with the project.

Says Milne, *"Watch this space until we work out the finer details!"*

**DeeDee Doke**  
East Regional Editor



Buckden Towers



NODA North East

# Spend, Spend, Spend

## The tour of Castleford



Director with Howard Nicholson (Viv and Keith's son) outside the sell out show in Dinnington

So as a director how seriously do you take researching your shows? Ashley Booker, Director and NODA Rep from NODA North East District 5 is passionate about knowing the background to the shows he directs where the subject matter is based on a true story. For his production of *The Sound of Music* with Dinnington Operatic Society in 2023, he visited Austria along

with his fiancé, John and mum, Susan to experience all of his 'Favourite Things'. When he was asked to direct *Spend, Spend, Spend* the musical about the life of Castleford born Viv Nicholson, who won £152,319 on the football pools in 1961, his friends Claire and Jo decided to take him on a tour of Viv's old stomping ground.

The musical follows Nicholson's life from rags to riches and back again. It tells the story of her five husbands, expensive cars, fur coats, jewellery, and her battle with alcohol. The tour was planned to start on the street where Viv was born and included visits to sites where she lived, was educated and worked, as well as taking in the nearby town, Garforth, where she moved after the pools win. Anyone who has seen or performed in the musical will recognise that as a song title! Ashley's knowledge of Viv's life was also tested as each stop on the route had quiz questions.

Born on 3rd April 1936, in Castleford, Vivien Asprey was very much a 'local girl' and, like many of her contemporaries, worked in a nearby sweet factory making Pontefract Cakes (the liquorice speciality of the neighbouring town). When she died The Times newspaper got it wrong and reported that she had been working in a 'cake factory' at the time of the infamous pools win. The factory no longer exists, but the location was tracked down and some of the liquorice sweets were shared.

Ashley enjoyed visiting, Kershaw Avenue, (the street where Viv had lived with her husband Keith at the time of winning the pools) and also talking to locals. To create the atmosphere Ashley was given a copy of a 1960s pools coupon to complete and surprise, surprise he won! His winnings were a 1961



shilling whereas Viv and Keith had won a life-changing £152,319 and 18 shillings equivalent to £3.5m today.

His detailed knowledge of the life of Viv came in very useful in directing the musical which played in Dinnington, South Yorkshire in October. Ashley was also thrilled to find that members of Viv's family had booked to see the show and they attended on Friday night. Howard Nicholson, son of Viv, told the cast the production was "awesome." When he was asked how he found the performances he said, "The show was raw, gritty and down to earth – like my mum."

Ashley explained, "Viv Nicholson had the most remarkable life, and I have been obsessed with this show and the woman herself since first seeing the show in 2004. As well as all the fun times, Viv's life was also full of tragedy, but this made her tougher and her resilience should be applauded. What I take away from Viv's story, is that of love. It doesn't matter how big or small your bank balance is, if you've got someone you love, you do indeed have everything."

Meanwhile Jo and Claire don't think that tours of Castleford will ever sell like the Sound of Music tours in Salzburg, but they are willing to share the quiz and route should anyone want to do some in-depth research ahead of producing the show!



Claire, Ashley and Jo outside the home of Viv and Keith when they has the infamous Pools win.



The Cast with Viv's family, Ashley and Jo

# TRW THEATRICAL RIGHTS WORLDWIDE

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**THE SCARLET  
LETTER**  
BY KATE HAMILL

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**FRANKENSTEIN;**  
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BY ROBERT LEWIS VAUGHAN  
FROM THE ORIGINAL 1818 EDITION OF THE NOVEL  
BY MARY SHELLEY

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THE-POOH**  
A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

BASED ON THE BOOK BY A.A. MILNE  
ADAPTED BY SEAN PATRICK NILL

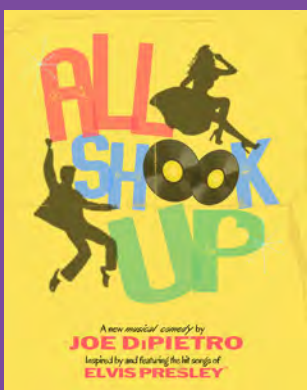
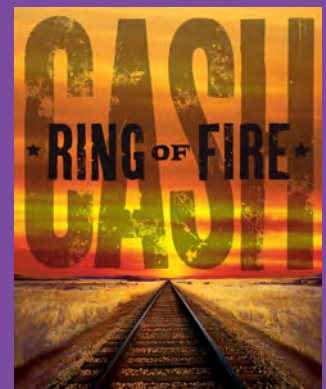
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**BORN WITH  
TEETH**

BY LIZ DUFFY ADAMS

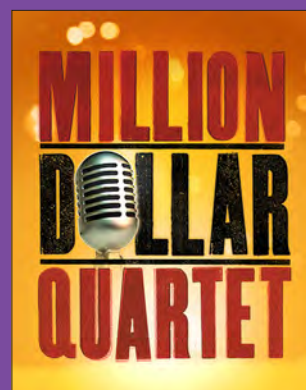
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**ELVIS PRESLEY**

**JANE EYRE**  
BY ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON  
ADAPTED FROM CHARLOTTE BRONTË

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**ZOEY'S  
PERFECT  
WEDDING**  
BY MATTHEW LÓPEZ

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# Behind the spotlight

## Behind the scenes of the NODA rebrand

In July, the NODA team gathered for an exciting photoshoot to kick off preparations for their upcoming rebrand launch, working to capture images that would later become the cutouts featured in the brand new NODA logo.

The shoot was brought to life with vibrant costumes, sourced from a talented local NODA member and from Charades Theatrical Costume Hire in St Helens. Each piece helped add a unique flair and depth to the visual concept. The photography, handled by the skilled team at Starlight Theatrical, beautifully highlighted the costumes and brought each character to life in a series of dynamic poses and expressions.

Take a peek at a few behind-the-scenes moments from what ended up being the hottest day of 2024! Here's a glimpse of the team in action, the costumes on display, and the meticulous effort that went into making each image just right for the rebrand.





NODA North

# Alnwick Theatre Club

## 75 years young and going strong!



*Goodnight Mr Tom*

There are, I suspect, still relatively few amateur clubs that have reached the dizzy heights of 75 years of show business. That really is an achievement and a tribute to all members of Alnwick Theatre Club, past and present that have played a part in our success.

Those of you reading this, with even the most rudimentary knowledge of maths, will be able to work out that it all started in 1949. The clouds of war had not long dispersed over Europe. Far from everything being back to normal, life in Alnwick, a historic market town in Northumberland, as elsewhere in the country, was tough with rationing still in place

and many families struggling without a principal wage earner. Not perhaps the most auspicious of times to think about starting a Theatre Club, but for Ken and Penny Lewis and friends, it was exactly right. The opportunity to begin to get life back to some semblance of normality and to start having fun again was too good to miss and so Alnwick Theatre Club was born.

The Theatre Club actually started initially as an adult evening class with the tutor acting as director / producer of the play performed at the end of each year. The first production was *Fools Rush In* in 1949, in Alnwick Castle's Guest Hall. It sounds very grand –

it wasn't! It was a great barn of a place with very poor facilities and a corridor which acted as a green room. It wasn't just the Guest Hall that was challenging, the next venue to be used by the club, Alnwick Town Hall in the heart of Alnwick and up a steep flight of stairs, was similarly demanding with a small stage, limited audience space and everything having to be shipped in. Indeed, it wasn't until the establishment of the drama centre at the Lindisfarne School as part of a refurbishment to create an adult education centre in 1976, that the club at last had the space and facilities to stage the sort of quality productions it aspired to.

However, in 1989, there was a real boost to the arts scene in Alnwick when The Playhouse Trust was formed to convert the town's Playhouse Cinema into a theatre, cinema and gallery space. Alnwick Theatre Club has been inordinately lucky to have had the Playhouse as its principal performing venue since the early 1990s. The reopening of the Playhouse gave not just the Theatre Club but many groups in town their big break. *Blithe Spirit* was the first play produced in the Playhouse in 1991, and was already the club's 92nd production. For a town the size of Alnwick to have the professional resources of the Playhouse at our disposal is absolutely incredible. The sheer size of the stage, the auditorium, the lighting etc are all facilities that many, many amateur societies would kill for. We have been so fortunate, particularly in recent years, to have skilled and enthusiastic technicians there to advise on lighting and sound as well as front of house staff to assist us. It lifts the level of each and every show way above amateur standard and takes it onto a semi-professional plane.

The early days of the club were all about plays and surprisingly, it wasn't until 1976, with the opening of the drama centre and with the club already past its silver jubilee that we started the tradition of an annual pantomime in Alnwick with *Cinderella* in the January of 1976. It is quite true to say that Alnwick Theatre Club's annual pantomime, which we have staged almost every year since, has become an Alnwick tradition bringing laughter and frivolity to those dark January days and involving large casts and crew beaver away on lines, songs and dances from September through to January. We have performed almost every traditional panto story and

some not so traditional – such as *Dracula the Panto!* – written by our own in-house scriptwriters under the pseudonym Eyelav Forsters!

Pantomime as you might expect provides a very rich vein of stories to be tapped often involving human or technical failure, often both, and one of my favourites was from *Sinbad the Sailor* in 2002. Norman Whitelam, a very accomplished serious actor with the club, had been persuaded and cajoled to play the sultan and had a chaise longue affair, on a raised dais, upstage bedecked in cushions, on which he was to lie back and munch languorously on some grapes, surrounded by his hareem of chorus girls. Unfortunately, one leg of the chaise longue had become detached and as Norman lay back with his grapes he disappeared down the back of the dais in a flurry of cushions and grapes arms akimbo!

We are blessed with a very loyal audience from all over North Northumberland and further afield. We are frequently compared favourably to the professional panto staged at the Theatre Royal in Newcastle. We were very fortunate this year in the NODA North Awards to have received awards for best panto villain (Chris Davies) and best youth ensemble in a panto for *Adventures in Pantoland* which, as it involved a quick canter through 6 different pantos, made a fitting tribute to 75 years for the club. We return next year in January with our 47th pantomime – *Pinocchio* – written by Sophie Towers, granddaughter of Penny Lewis one of our founder members in 1949.

From our plays it's hard to pick out favourite shows from the 25 years I have been involved with the club, but for me, some of the

outstanding and well received successes have been our large cast epic children's shows: *Wind in the Willows*, *Danny Champion of the World* and *Goodnight Mr Tom*, and from the adult shows, *Stepping Out*, *Dads Army*, *Brassed Off*, *Calendar Girls* and *Birdsong* performed in 2016, commemorating 100 years since the Battle of the Somme. Everyone in the club I know has their own favourite shows and memories, but the common denominator on these large cast shows has been the family feeling and the great fun that performing live theatre brings.

The quality of our shows has been recognised in our awards over the years with recent NODA North Awards for *Brassed Off*, *Kiss me Like You Mean It* and *Goodnight Mister Tom* and last year's panto *Adventures in Pantoland* winning awards this year.

These awards reflect the club's greatest asset which is its members and supporters. We have been so lucky to have had some gifted actors and producer/directors in the club over the years, many now sadly who have exited the stage but who have played a key part in our history.

Lastly, as in so many clubs within the NODA family up and down the land, for every one of those appearing on stage there is at least one hero not in the spotlight, working back stage as crew, in the lighting box, on costumes or props or on front of house. Without those unsung heroes we could not do what we do and certainly the shows would not have looked half as 'professional' as they have done over the last 75 years.

**Peter Biggers**  
Chair Alnwick Theatre Club



**Unleash your  
creativity into  
the spotlight  
with the 2025  
NODA Theatre  
Summer  
School**

**NODA**  
For every stage  
Theatre  
Summer School

# 2025 Courses

*"If you've ever been intrigued by doing a NODA theatre summer school it truly is the most amazingly rewarding bubble of love, support and gorgeous soul food. Give it a go. You may surprise yourself" CE 2024*

**NODA Theatre Summer School offers a transformative week of professional training led by top industry experts. Whether you're a performer, director, or technician, you'll gain valuable skills that make a lasting impact on your craft.**

**Immerse yourself in a fully residential programme designed to maximise learning and creativity.**

**Connect with fellow theatre enthusiasts who share your passion, and create unforgettable memories both in and out of the classroom. This is your chance to learn, grow and bond with like-minded individuals, all while deepening your love for theatre.**



## Unlocking Schwartz

A course for singers, dancers and actors who want to develop their performance skills by practically exploring the work of inspiring composer and lyricist Stephen Schwartz.



## Becoming an Actor Musician

A course for performers who play an instrument and are seeking an opportunity to explore where acting, singing and musicianship collide and create wonderful musical theatre.

A specific standard of playing an instrument will be required.



## Actors' Toolbox

An essential course for actors of every level of experience who want to spend a week going back to basics, creating the foundations on which to build inspiring performances.



## Revelling in Restoration Comedy

A course for actors and directors who relish the idea of spending a week revelling in classical theatre that is witty, rebellious and occasionally lewd.



## (How to) Direct Plays

This is a must attend course for anyone wanting to build skills and confidence in creating plays on stage. It will include exploration of how to get the best out of actors and how to translate a script into something that will engage your audience.



## Singing for Performance - West End Revivals

This course is for singers who want to become better at their craft – using the music of popular West End revivals as inspiration.





### **Make a New Musical**

This course is for actors, singers and writers of song and script. In the space of a week, ideas will be taken from initial concept to performance using inspiration from existing musicals. Students will also get chance to build their performance skills in the process.



### **Voice and Text**

This course is for actors of all levels of experience who want to dive deep into vocal technique and how to apply it in rehearsals and performance. Students will have the chance to go back to fundamentals to discover/rediscovers the way to a fully supported voice.



### **Ensemble Excellence**

A course where both performers and directors can develop their skills in this essential element of theatre. Students will practically play with a host of staging techniques and performance skills.



### **Playwright's Retreat**

An opportunity for aspiring writers to work on their dream script project with input and guidance from an experienced tutor and the support and critique of their peers. This course will create valuable space to write in a supportively challenging environment.



### **Making for Actors/Acting for Makers**

A unique course for actors who want to learn how to make expressive masks and puppets or makers who want to learn how to bring their creations to life on stage.



### **Choreography**

A course for choreographers – established or just starting out – to develop skills in this vital aspect of musical theatre production or pantomime. Students will develop a toolbox of techniques and approaches to enhance their next theatrical adventure.



### **Stage Management**

A course for students who want to learn essential skills for effective Stage Management – an element of theatre that revolutionises production values and quality.



### **Costume – Aesthetics and Accessories Short Course**

A course for students who want to gain practical insight into how to enhance shop bought costume to look old or different and how to accessorise them to fit the need of the production.



### **Make Up For Theatre Short Course**

A course where students can learn the basics of make up for theatre and begin to explore some specific techniques to enhance the aesthetic of any production.

# What do I need to know?

## Who can book?

Students must be at least 18 years old and be a member of NODA – this can be a member of a NODA affiliated group or as an individual/joint member.

## When and where?

The school is held at Yarnfield Park, Stone, Staffordshire. The dates for the 2025 school are 26th July to 2nd August.

## How much does it cost?

The full week will cost £750 (including a £150 deposit). The short courses will be £450 (including a £150 deposit)

## What is included?

- A full week of training
- Evening events and courses
- Accommodation and food

## Is there financial help available?

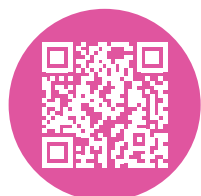
Yes there is. You can apply separately for financial assistance once your booking has been accepted. The bursary application has to be submitted no later than mid January.

## When can I book!

Now! Booking opened on 1st December 2024. Courses do tend to fill up quickly, so don't leave it too long to book!

## The small print

Course places are subject to availability. For more information, please see our terms and conditions on our website.



**Ready to book or want  
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# Regional vacancies

**Fancy volunteering with NODA? Check out the vacancies within your region and get in touch today!**

NODA North  
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NODA North East  
**Regional Representative**  
North and West Yorkshire drama groups

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[andy.brown@noda.org.uk](mailto:andy.brown@noda.org.uk)

# Training Suggestions



**NSPCC Learning**  
[learning.nspcc.org.uk](http://learning.nspcc.org.uk)

Online safeguarding training for volunteers, chaperones and trustees



**MHFA England**  
[mhfaengland.org](http://mhfaengland.org)

Mental health first aid training – in person and virtual training



**Action Counters Terrorism Awareness**  
[ct.protectuk.police.uk/act](http://ct.protectuk.police.uk/act)

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



NODA North East

## Glitter and glam

### An amdram celebration



It was March 2020, when all theatre stopped, including amateur theatre and it was almost 2 years before we could return completely to the rehearsal rooms and theatres.

Then in 2021, I was sitting in my living room thinking about how everyone was starting to emerge and I thought we in amateur theatre, should celebrate the fact that we had survived to perform again and I thought that perhaps a dinner/dance might be a good idea.

I contacted Phil Smith our North East Rep and my friend Becky Jones from the Woodseats MTC and they came on board being as enthusiastic as I was.

A venue was booked for March 2022, with food and a DJ included in the package. Then emails went out to the various theatre groups in Sheffield. Phil, Becky and myself had decided if only 50 people responded then it would still be a good evening. Well! In

a very short space of time, we were having to extend the room because we had 200 people wanting to attend with the final number being almost 250.

The evening arrived and we decorated the tables with balloons and table favours of mini chocolates. The dress code was black tie and evening dress and everyone really pulled out all the stops with loads of glitter and glam. There was a photographer to capture everyone arriving on the red carpet plus a trumpeter playing in the background.

During the evening there were of course speeches and a video was shown that had been put together during the pandemic by Adam Walker of the Woodseats MTC which included many of the musical theatre groups in Sheffield singing 'Don't Stop Believin'.

The evening was a brilliant success with so many people commenting how great it was to

mix and mingle with like minded people who you were meeting for the first time and, after the evening, we received so many emails and messages asking for us to organise another evening.

So, we had a meeting and a second dinner was organised for 2024. This second dinner/dance was also a massive success. The format was very similar to 2022, but this time there was a memorial video featuring members of groups who had passed away since the previous dinner, plus a video of a collage of the various groups past shows and advertising their next show.

Like I said it was another great success with people asking us to make it a regular event so watch this space in 2026.

Sheffield groups have always supported each other and the whole thing has been so worthwhile and heartening for all of us. It shows that people involved with Am Dram are just brilliant and fully deserve to celebrate the fact that we came through such an awful time, re-emerging successful and strong.

Just to finish with, during the pandemic I heard a radio interview with Julian Fellowes, the writer of Downton Abbey when he gave a great quote, he said that, *"People in theatre are in the cheering up business"* and this is so true. So, let's get on with the business of cheering ourselves up and of course the most important people, our audiences. See you on stage or at the next dinner perhaps!

**Mary Newey**

Chair - Woodseats Musical Theatre Company

# NODApics

A few of our member submissions to our Instagram page





NODA North West

# St Joseph's Players

## Saving their historic venue

One of the country's oldest amateur dramatic societies is appealing for the local community to act – and help prevent the final curtain falling on its home for the past century.

Leigh's St Joseph's Players, founded around 1850, has launched a fundraising campaign to save their historic Chapel Street Hall: the venue for plays, musicals and pantomimes that have entertained generations of theatregoers.

The society, a registered charity, has taken over the running of the hall from the adjoining St Joseph's RC Church. Deterioration during the Covid pandemic had put the viability of the building at risk, so society members stepped in to take over the lease.

However, a recent survey has highlighted the size of the task ahead.

Rainwater is entering the building in several places resulting in damp, mould and crumbling plasterwork. On top of roof repairs, missing guttering must be reinstated and brickwork repointed.

Members have already given up weekends to give the internal areas a facelift, but now they are facing a race against time to make the building watertight as winter looms.

Grant applications are being explored and the society has set up a GoFundMe page which has already raised more than £4,000 in generous donations.

Society Chair, Gabrielle Fitzsimons, said: "St Joseph's Hall



*has been at the heart of our town since 1925.*

*For many years it was the hub of the community, hosting weekly dances, drama festivals, school shows and family celebrations.*

*It is perhaps best known now as the home of St Joseph's Players, who have been performing there for almost a century.*

*Community is at the heart of everything our society does. Our membership is diverse, with members coming from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds and we are proud of the welcoming atmosphere we create.*

*Now we want to save a community building that everybody can be proud of."*

Along with St Joseph's Players, other local groups depend on the hall for a home, such as local Brownies.

Dedicated society members have cut operating costs by opening and closing the hall themselves, and have taken over cleaning, decorating and administration duties in their spare time. But the hall's future remains uncertain.

Gabrielle added: "We appreciate the financial difficulties many of us are facing right now so every single donation will be valued, no



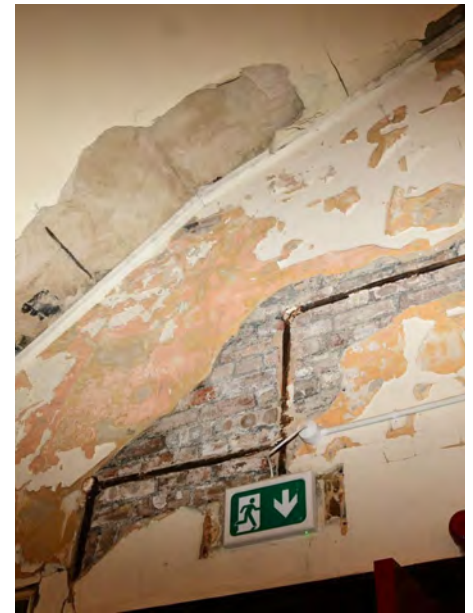


*matter how large or small. This is a huge project and any help would be hugely appreciated.*

*Alternatively, if any local businesses would be willing to*

*provide sponsorship, or would be able to offer expertise, assistance, materials or time, that would be wonderful.*

*Our aim is to put the hall at the*



*centre of the community once more, creating a place where we can all come together to have fun, put on events and be entertained."*

NODA South West

## Karnon Kids

### Putting their certificates to good use



Karnon Kidz (the Youth Section of the Carnon Downs Drama Group) were nominated in the categories of Youth Award for Company Characterisation and Best Youth Production Cup. Unfortunately

they didn't win either category, however, all was not lost and, much to our surprise, Karnon Kidz was announced as the winners of the Youth Advisor's Award!

Jo Wilson-Hunt, NODA's South West Regional Youth Co-ordinator, emphasised that the award was truly deserved and that her daughter had told her that this was the best youth show she had seen in 2023, so the society were suitably chuffed!

But now a year has passed, and Karnon Kidz have managed to make the most of their new certificate, as a prop on stage! The society has recently produced *Matilda Jr the Musical* which the now NODA President, Graham Liverton, came to see and met with the cast. What a novel way to use an award.



# NODA North

## Performance awards

NODA North was thrilled to once again hold their annual performance awards this September in Newcastle.

The event saw almost 700 guests from across the North dress in their finest and return to the Gosforth Park Hotel, to celebrate their shared hobby and the wonderful amateur theatre that has been produced across the region over the past year. The day was attended by NODA National President, Graham Liverton, who kindly travelled to the event, and of course, the North's Regional Councillor, Peter Oliver. This year, local actor and pantomime scriptwriter, Tom Whalley, returned to host the awards.

As of last year, the NODA North Performance Awards are split into two separate events, with the youth awards being held on the afternoon and the adult awards being held on the night. This allowed the region to increase the capacity for the awards, and to also have more time for each event, resulting in more chances to socialise and even host a disco at the end of the night. It's especially lovely to give the youth their own event, where the focus is rightfully and entirely on them, and a wonderful chance to acknowledge and celebrate the budding future of amateur theatre in our region.

The whole day, from 2pm – 12am, was filled with excitement, elation and energy. Over 170 youth and adult awards were won across the categories, which included Best Individual, Best Supporting, Best Concert, Best Individual in a Drama, Best Drama, Best Comedy in a Pantomime, Best Dame in a Pantomime, Best Villain in a Pantomime, Best Pantomime, Best Individual in a Musical, Best Supporting in a Musical, Best Ensemble in a Musical, Best Musical and a Commendation Award.

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



All photos One Imagery Photography





Joyce Lonsdale Award winner – Jim Bailey



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