

TnodaDAY★

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Make up masterclass with
Utopia Costumes

**Major research project on
amateur theatre**

New NODA collaborations

**Stage manager tips from
The Border Studio**

NODASafe
and
NODA Insurance
pull out
production checklist
inside

Please share this copy of NODA TODAY with fellow society members

National Operatic and Dramatic Association

15 The Metro Centre
Peterborough
PE2 7UH
Tel: +44 (0) 1733 374 790
Fax: +44 (0) 1733 237 286
Email: info@noda.org.uk

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01733 374 790
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Design and Production
warwickprint
enquiries@warwickprint.co.uk

Head Office Staff

Bronwen Stanway
bronwen@noda.org.uk

Dale Freeman
dale@noda.org.uk

Antonia Gray
antonia@noda.org.uk

Sue Cuthbert
sue@noda.org.uk

Beverly Clarke
beverly@noda.org.uk

Hazel Allerton
hazel@noda.org.uk

Susannah Herzog
susannah@noda.org.uk

11/14

head office



Welcome to the fourth edition of NODA TODAY. In this edition you'll find a handy pull out production checklist from NODASafe and NODA Insurance. We encourage societies to use the checklist for your next production to ensure that you put on a safe and an enjoyable show that meets all the health and safety requirements. You'll find the checklist across pages 17 to 20 of the magazine.

In this edition we also have some great articles from our contributors, including a make up masterclass from Ewan at Utopia Costumes (p.16) and some more tips on being a stage manager from Graham at The Border Studio (p.21), both of whom are regular contributors to NODA TODAY. In addition, we've got a fascinating article about the first academic study into amateur theatre in the UK, written by one of the academics involved (p.4), and information on some new exciting NODA collaborations (p.7), along with lots more national news and our eleven regional spreads.

As we approach the festive season, best wishes to all NODA societies putting on seasonal shows up and down the country, and look out for the next edition of NODA TODAY in early 2015.

If you have any further feedback on any aspect of the magazine or how you'd like to receive information in future, please contact us on **01733 374 790** or email info@noda.org.uk. ★

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Chief Executive
tony@noda.org.uk



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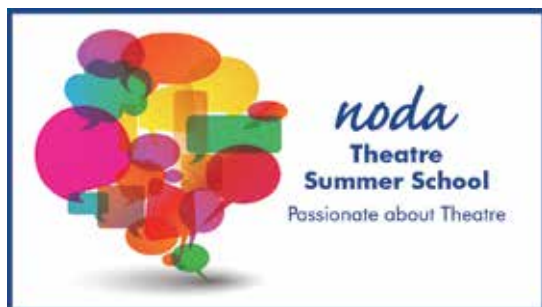
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did you noda?



Online booking for NODA Theatre Summer School 2015 opens at midnight on 30th November 2014. Simply go to www.noda.org.uk/summerschool to find all the information you need to know about Summer School 2015 and to book your place. NODA Theatre Summer School will run from Saturday 1st to Saturday 8th August 2015.



It's that time of year again and your NODA subscription renewal will be making its way to you very shortly. Make sure you renew your membership to continue receiving

NODA TODAY and to benefit from all the perks of NODA membership. Go to www.noda.org.uk/subscriptions for information on member benefits and subscription rates for 2015, which have increased slightly this year.

The 2014 National AGM and Presidential Gala was a great success and we welcomed former South East Councillor John



Barnes as our President for 2014 – 2015. Details of the weekend and the winners and runners up of the programme and poster competition are available on the NODA website.

Look out for information on the launch of NODASafe's new health and safety online training course, exclusively for NODA members. This

is a great way for your society to gain essential training and instruction.

Your story could appear in the next edition of NODA TODAY! If you're a member and you have a story that you think should appear in your region's pages in the next edition of NODA TODAY, then get in touch with your regional editor for more information. The names and contact details of all NODA regional editors can be found in the regional pages of this magazine, and also on the 'Regions' pages of the NODA website (www.noda.org.uk/regions).

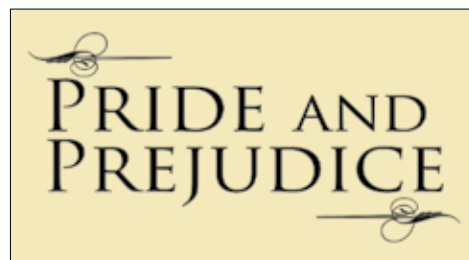
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Amateur Dramatics: Crafting Communities in Time and Space

Amateur theatre has rarely been the subject of academic research, and we decided that it was high time that was put right. When I say 'we' I mean me (Helen Nicholson) and Dr. Jane Milling (Exeter University) and Professor Nadine Holdsworth (The University of Warwick). Thankfully, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) agreed with us, and we were awarded a major grant for a research project that runs from 2013 - 2016. Our team has expanded to include Erin, Cara and Sarah, and you can see who we are at www.amateurdramaresearch.com.

There is such rich history and such a wealth of theatre-making undertaken by amateur companies that we needed to define the parameters of the research early in the process. If we cast our net too widely, there's a risk that the research lacks depth. Too narrow, and we miss work of huge significance. We are funded under the AHRC's 'Connected Communities' scheme, and in part this has defined the scope of the project. We have become interested in what it means to be an amateur – a lover of theatre – and how amateur theatre contributes to constructing and sustaining communities.

One of the questions we are often asked is why we have called the project amateur dramatics - rather than amateur theatre, amateur performance or community theatre. Community theatre (theatre led by professional theatre-makers such as Ann Jellicoe or David Edgar) has been well researched for a long time, and there are several books on the subject. Some people are quite cross with us for choosing amateur dramatics (the am-dram phrase seems quite provocative in some quarters!), but it was chosen deliberately for a few reasons. First, we're keen to challenge some of the cultural stereotypes that sometimes surround amateur theatre-making, and by drawing attention to the phrase 'amateur dramatics' in our title we hoped to prompt debate. Second, it is the phrase most often used by people in the community who are audience members

Major Research Project on Amateur Theatre

rather than in the company. Thirdly, in this project we are interested in amateur dramatic companies – companies that are solely concerned with making theatre. Plumping for this term in our research project title was a way of signalling this – though rest assured that we'll be questioning its use in our research.

The research is designed to learn more about how and why amateurs spend their time making theatre. We're interested in the repertoire and craft, the organisational and economic structures, the relationship to place and community. We're interested in amateur theatre across England, but we also have three major case studies that will allow us to drill deeper into the research questions: amateur theatre in rural Devon,

the significance of amateur companies in constructed urban communities (garden cities, suburbia and new towns around London) and in the military, where the Royal Navy Theatre Association is our key partner. Each time we talk about these case studies we are reminded of others that would also fit our interests, and although we know that there is so much more to research we know we must keep our focus! In addition to our case studies, our wonderful post-doctoral researcher Dr Erin Walcon is meeting people in different parts of the country and gathering stories, ideas, histories and so much more.

So what have we learnt so far – as the project reaches its first birthday? We're learning about theatre as a life-long personal interest; its relationship to heritage, nation and community; its contribution to the cultural economy. One of the most important things that we have learnt is that there is a wealth of knowledge that exists in the amateur theatre community, and that many amateur companies already have their own archives, oral histories and traditions that need to be heard more widely. For that reason we'd like to invite you to join us as co-researchers in this project. We have been very touched by the interest and generosity of amateur theatre-makers, and by the warmth of NODA members at your annual conference. We'd love to be able to talk to you all and we hope to meet as many people as possible in the time we have available. What we do know is that there's a depth of knowledge about amateur theatre in NODA, and we hope that you'll share this with us. So, how can you get involved?

First, if you have already published histories of your companies and theatres, we'd love to read them. If you can spare a copy, please send it to me at the address below. (If you'd like it returned, please include an address.) Second, we are inviting you to contribute to our store of interviews, images and stories by talking to the people who really make amateur theatre what it is today. Erin will be inviting specific contributions by Twitter (@amateurdrama), but please also get in touch by post, via our website (www.amateurdramaresearch.com) or email amdramaresearch@gmail.com. We are putting together a toolkit with fun ideas about how to capture your great stories – and we'll send it to anyone who is interested!

We look forward to hearing from you. ★

Helen Nicholson

Professor of Theatre and Performance,
Royal Holloway, University of London,
Egham, Surrey, TW20 0EX

Get to Know Your Region's **YOUTH ADVISOR**

Since Phil Barnett was appointed to NODA Council to develop a strategy for youth, NODA's national youth strategy has been progressing in all the regions, aided by the hard work of our regional youth advisors.

NODA's regional youth advisors are there to support our youth groups and any groups with young people involved, and to help and advise our members with any questions or problems they may encounter when dealing with young people in the theatre or putting on shows involving young people.

On the right are all of our regional youth advisors and their contact details, so you can easily get in touch with your youth advisor and access the incredible support they provide.

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



NODA Scotland
Craig Inglis
craig.inglis@noda.org.uk



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



NODA South East
John Thomas
john.thomas@noda.org.uk



NODA London
Ann Hertler-Smith
ann.hertler-smith
@noda.org.uk



NODA South West
Lynne Caygill
lynne.caygill@noda.org.uk



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



NODA Wales and Ireland
Zoe Richards
zoe.richards@noda.org.uk



NODA North East
Vacant – Please contact
Regional Councillor



NODA West Midlands
Steve Groves
steve.groves@noda.org.uk



NODA North West
Jenny King
jenny.king@noda.org.uk

Amateurs match up in the eyes of audiences

Audiences draw limited distinctions between subsidised, commercial and amateur theatre and dance performances, according to new research investigating perceptions of cultural value.

Amateur performances, while not quite as highly rated as their professional counterparts, are not widely different from them in terms of the experiences they deliver to audiences, according to a new report revealing how audiences value amateur, subsidised and commercial dance and theatre. Among the qualities that audiences value in all performances are “the skilled and arduous labour of performers”, and this appreciation can be even greater for amateur performers. While the quality of amateur performances is more likely to be considered “unreliable” than professional theatre, there is a feeling that it can represent better value for money: people are willing to pay more for good experiences, but are upset by high fees and ticket costs for poor commercial work. Researchers also observed that amateur and local theatre companies are able to command a loyalty that leads to more repeat attendance in larger groups.

Analysis has revealed that, across all three sectors, there are two core dimensions that contribute to audience members’ experience of a performance, the first relating to their emotional, dramatic and aesthetic engagement with it, and the second being about having a “good time”. In the study, subsidised theatre was more likely than commercial theatre to be described as confrontational, challenging, surprising, and making audiences use their imagination. But report authors Joshua Edelman, Maja Šorli and Mark Robinson point out that while novelty and innovation matter for arts funders, these in themselves are not values the audience seems to focus on. By contrast, commercial theatre was more likely to be described as “satisfyingly complete”, exciting, easier to follow, relaxing and good fun compared to both subsidised and amateur theatre.

These and other findings relating to the audience experience of performances are reported in ‘The value of theatre and dance for Tyneside’s audiences’, which is the latest report to emerge from the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s Cultural Value Project. The research involved over 1,800 respondents

at 26 different dance and theatre productions that were presented on Tyneside earlier this year.

The project aimed not only to examine why people attend theatre and dance performances, and the nature and value of the experiences they have, but also to provide an insight into perceptions of work in the amateur, commercial and subsidised sectors, and “the ways audiences navigate the ‘theatre ecology’, to what ends and with what results.”

Further analysis of the research data is planned, and because the project’s methods were designed in parallel with similar projects in six similar cities around Europe, this will include comparative analysis. ★

Liz Hill

This article was originally published online by Arts Professional (www.artsprofessional.co.uk)

NODA Theatre Summer School Remembers

At 10pm on Monday 4th August, students at NODA Theatre Summer School in Warwick observed the ‘lights out’ ritual in remembrance of the start of WWI.

The lights were turned off and the candles glowed as the entire Summer School reflected on this momentous anniversary, the likes of which we hope never to see again. At approximately 10.15pm, Chris Pike (one of the accompanists at the School) quietly and solemnly played three songs of the time to bring the moment of reflection to a quiet close.

As we know, it is almost impossible to stop ‘theatricals’ singing, and so the assembly soberly put the words to the tunes in a most fitting tribute to those whose lives were lost. ★



New NODA collaborations

The Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT) has recently become a corporate supporter of NODA and we are looking forward to working closely with the ABTT in the coming year. Below is some information about the ABTT that we're sure our members will find interesting.

The ABTT seeks to support the technician in their key role. Founded over 50 years ago to advance public education in the technical subjects connected with the theatre and theatrical presentation, we engage with our membership to ensure they are well informed and act on their behalf to ensure regulation is appropriate to the needs of the performing arts. The ABTT is a registered charity providing advice, information, guidance and training. We offer a free telephone enquiry service to help solve safety and technical problems. We deliver our training at the point of demand so we travel all over the country to venues and to technical teams wherever they are located. Membership is available to anyone who is interested in the technical presentation of theatrical works and good theatre design.

We also publish *Sightline*, the quarterly magazine for technical theatre with news, reviews, features and safety matters. We also publish codes of practice specific to backstage needs and we jointly produce the Technical Standards for Places of Entertainment. We present the annual ABTT theatre show of backstage and front-of-house equipment and supplies. We arrange visits, conferences, forums, lectures and meetings for our members. Trips to interesting theatres and productions are organised frequently by ABTT NorthNet, a very active branch of members in the North of England. Please visit our website for more information at www.abtt.org.uk.

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Here at NODA we're also very pleased to be the official partner of Panto Day 2014. Founded in 2011, Panto Day 2014 will take place on Friday 12th December and is a day to celebrate the UK's most beloved art form. The celebrations in 2013 saw

two million Twitter users (@Panto_Day) and over 150 theatres participate, and this year we hope even more people will get involved.

One of the partnership's key outputs is a national survey of amateur pantomime to run alongside the National Database of Pantomime Performance's yearly statistics. Amateur dramatic societies

are being invited to fill in an online questionnaire about their production at www.celebratepanto.co.uk, with the results made available on Panto Day and compared with those of the National Database of Pantomime Performance, to provide the first ever comparison between the amateur and professional sector. The survey is open until 1st December so there's still time to get online and fill it in. ★



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Friday 12th December 2014

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Take part in the first ever National Amateur Panto Survey!
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regionalroundup East

Never work with children or animals

East Committee

Councillor
Don McKay
01480 219181
don.mckay@noda.org.uk

Membership Secretary
Chris Avery
chris.avery@noda.org.uk

Web Manager
June Forway
01480 300409
june.forway@noda.org.uk

Awards Secretary
Jane Farr
01553 772038
jane.farr@noda.org.uk

Magazine Editor
Julia Rymer
07786 620623
julia.rymer@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor
Zelda Rolfe
01603 408017
zelda.rolfe@noda.org.uk

Minutes Secretary
Lavinia Pirret
01362 851927
lavinia.pirret@noda.org.uk

East Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1
Bella Coleman
07540 063946
bella.coleman@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2
Vacant

DISTRICT 3
Nova Horley
01582 604344
nova.horley@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 4 N
Stephen P E Hayter
01553 671932
stephen.hayter@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 4 S
Julie Petrucci
01223 880023
julie.petrucci@noda.org.uk

Never work with children or animals. Who coined that old phrase? Having been given the job of directing *Annie* at the Marina Theatre in Lowestoft, I realised that not only did we need talented little girls, but also one super talented dog to play the role of Sandy. So, where to find a local dog who could not only act, but one who would endear itself as *Annie's* mutt?

On the internet I found an image of a little terrier wearing a pink ballet leotard and tutu, and dancing her paws off to a delighted crowd with her owner Sandra Sexton. Ruby had been re-homed by Meadowgreen Rescue Centre after she was found abandoned in a field. Sandra knew that Ruby was special but had no idea that this fearful pup would later steal the limelight on stage.

Initially very timid and recoiling from contact, Sandra said: "Ruby grew used to her new home and began to trust us. One day she stood on her hind legs and danced, and the more she was fussed over the more she danced." Having discovered Ruby's passion, Sandra lets her perform for charity events to help support and promote the work of rescue centres, particularly Meadowgreen, which gave her kindness and shelter when she needed help.

So far, with Sandra's help Ruby has raised over £3,000. And the show? Well, *Annie* was a great success. Ruby was the ultimate professional with very

few diva demands, apart from a regular supply of sausages (which Sandra carries at all times). And the children? Of course, they were brilliant too!

Julia Rymer
Regional Representative, District 6
Magazine Editor,
NODA East



Joan Abbs, representing Bury St Edmunds Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society, being presented with the East region's Councillor's Cup at the East Region Gala Awards in April.

The cup was awarded to recognise BSEADS's one hundred and ten year achievement in presenting amateur theatre in Bury St Edmunds. ★

DISTRICT 5
Susan Dupont
01603 416638
susan.dupont@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 6
Terry Rymer
07786 620622
terry.rymer@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 7
Susan Hartwell
01371 872657
susan.hartwell@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 8
Stewart Adkins
01621 891143
stewart.adkins@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 9
Vicki Avery
01992 441441
vicki.avery@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 10
Tessa Davies
01702 525112
tessa.davies@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 11
Ann Platten
01787 374069
ann.platten@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 12
Pamela White
01449 721467
pamela.white@noda.org.uk

One hundred years young



One hundred years ago in 1914, as the dark clouds of war were looming, a group of ordinary folk in Norfolk were preparing for a performance of *Margery Dene*. Though hailed a great success, elation was short lived for the newly formed Cromer Amateur Operatic Society, as a few weeks later the country was at war.

Reformed in 1923 as the Cromer and Sheringham Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society, the group then combined with performers from Sheringham to become the Cromer and Sheringham Players in 1932, performing *H.M.S. Pinafore* to a delighted audience at Cromer Town Hall during the Easter of 1950. This first wonderful performance was only made possible by three pre-war members acting as guarantors to the tune of £50 each, which is approximately £1,200 each today!

Since then, a major production has been performed each year at the Pavilion Theatre and Sheringham Little Theatre,

from comedies to classic drama, with the most recent being *The Elephant Man*. Following a NODA award nomination for our 2013 production of *The Sound of Music*, and having received the NODA district 5 best play award for *How The Other Half Loves*, the society put on its most ambitious show yet in May with Lionel Bart's *Oliver!*. Sets were made for the production, as well as over 250 costumes, plus a superb orchestra led the musical way as over 80 cast members performed (including over 40 children). This centenary celebration aimed to make the audience laugh, cry, sing, gasp with wonder and shout for more when the performance was over...which they did! The society was privileged to have then NODA President Bert Lumsden present at the opening night (pictured, left), and he afterwards unveiled a plaque to mark the society's centenary.



For members though, it's a labour of love, and the friendships, laughs, and yes, the romances, that have resulted from being part of this society make every moment a creative, hilarious, warming and wonderful experience. ★



The society has donated many thousands of pounds to local charities and organisations, and this year we are supporting Changing Faces, About with Friends and the Toys and Tins Appeal, a joint venture between BBC Radio Norfolk and The Salvation Army. As an amateur society, our success is based on the enthusiasm of our members, who devote time in the evening and at weekends to ensure each production reaches the award-winning standard that audiences have come to expect from us.

East Norfolk Operatic Society is actively seeking new members to rejuvenate the society. They have a history of musical productions stretching back over 50 years but urgently need new blood to take the society forward.

They are a friendly bunch and enjoy singing and socialising. They meet Tuesday evenings at 7.30pm at St Mary's Church Hall in Wroxham. All newcomers are welcome.

For more details contact the Membership Secretary by email at robsonfran@hotmail.com.

Larry Pendleton
East Norfolk Operatic Society



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East Midlands

East Midlands Committee

Councillor
Nanette Lovell
01604 712651
nanette.lovell@noda.org.uk

Regional Secretary
Mavis Beddall
0115 913 9490
mavis.beddall@noda.org.uk

Membership Secretary
Phil Williams
0115 9198545
phil.williams@noda.org.uk

Regional Treasurer
Sue Haydon
01604 411443
sue.haydon@noda.org.uk

Web Manager
Michelle Holland
07790 942899
michelle.holland@noda.org.uk

Awards Secretary
Peter Beddall
0115 913 9490
peter.beddall@noda.org.uk

Magazine/News Editor
Alex Wood
alex.wood@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor
Amanda Hall
0773 9573079
amanda.hall@noda.org.uk



Scene from 'Blitz!'

Remembering the world at war

The year 2014 marks seventy years since D-Day, and to commemorate this significant year Northampton Musical Theatre Company has this year performed two wartime musicals. NMTC started in 1898 as the Northampton Amateur Operatic Company and has performed annually since then, with the exception of the two world wars.

The society's first show this year was *Blitz!*, Lionel Bart's follow-up to the world renowned *Oliver!*, performed in the Cripps Theatre, Northampton, in May.

During the run of *Blitz!* NMTC was pleased to support the Army Benevolent Fund - The Soldiers' Charity, which offers lifetime care for soldiers and their families. The ABF was formed in 1946 in response to the need to look after

soldiers returning from WWII. Sadly, over the years the need for their help has not reduced. In fact, it is now greater than ever. ABF - The Soldiers' Charity helps returning soldiers with many of the ordinary things in life that can make an immense difference.

For the year's second WWII show, NMTC moved its focus to the American Navy and *South Pacific*. For this production the company returned to Northampton's Royal and Derngate Theatre, where they had previously been resident from its opening in 1983 until 2009.

In other good news, NMTC has recently added another NODA Best Musical Award to its collection for its recent production of *Oklahoma!*. ★

East Midlands Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1
Keith Scott-Savage
01332 670239
keith.scott-savage@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2
Joyce Handbury
01773 745082
joyce.handbury@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 3
Matt Fry
07554 402324
matt.fry@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 4
Anne Key-Huckerby
01522 682964
anne.key-huckerby@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 5
Peter Breach
01406 373359
peter.breach@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 6A & B
Christine Clarke
01455 610010
christine.clarke@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 7
Caroline Jervis
01536 391307
caroline.jervis@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 8
Jenny Chandler
01604 233709

We're on Facebook!



NODA East Midlands now has a Facebook page at www.facebook.com/NODAEastMidlands. Check it out and 'like' our page.





Long Eaton Youth Group Awards

Youth theatre is thriving in Long Eaton after the spring production of *Seussical Jr* at the Duchess Theatre by Long Eaton Operatic Society Youth Group. Amanda Hall, NODA Youth Advisor for the East Midlands, presented youth awards for three, six and nine years of service to fourteen members for their dedication to the group and to NODA.

Pictured are the proud recipients with Amanda.

Back row L-R
Tim Meakin, Sherree Strickland, Amanda Hall, Merrin Shelton, Eleanor Carty, Jack Woolley, Josh Jones, Ed Hewes

Centre row L-R
Hannah Smith, Megan Fennell

Front row L-R
Jess Abel, Tayla Evans, Abbie Harper

Also given awards but not present were Holly Sims and Abbey Walker. ★

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Awards Secretary: Peter Beddall

65 YEARS

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50 YEARS

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45 YEARS

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Chesterfield Operatic Society Sheila Rothman

Northampton Musical Theatre Company Joy Eason

Ripley & Alfreton Musical Theatre Company Stephen Bartram

40 YEARS

County Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society..... Margaret Page

Gainsborough Amateur Operatic Society Susan Wrang

Guilsborough Music & Drama Society Pamela Townsend

Hinckley Concordia Amateur Operatic Society..... Brenda Watts

Northampton Musical Theatre Company

..... Nanette Lovell & Janice Hilton

Ripley & Alfreton Musical Theatre Company.....

..... Rosemarie Wood

The Watson Players Beryl Boustead & Gillian Swift

Welford Amateur Dramatic Society..... Madeline Howell-Jones

The full listings of ten to thirty-five year awards and youth awards can be found on the East Midlands pages of the NODA website.



regionalroundup London

London Committee

Councillor

Jacquie Stedman

020 8529 3318

jacquie.stedman@noda.org.uk

Regional Secretary

Cortina Henderson

020 7407 4245

cortina.henderson@noda.org.uk

Treasurer

Pam Armstrong

020 8587 1015

pam.armstrong@noda.org.uk

Membership Secretary

Frances Chalkwright

020 8926 7413

frances.chalkwright@noda.org.uk

Awards Secretary

Josie Shingles

020 8953 6560

josie.shingles@noda.org.uk

Online Team

Darren Knight

07891 326 568

darren.knight@noda.org.uk

Cortina Henderson

020 7407 4245

cortina.henderson@noda.org.uk

Magazine Editor

Rosemary Roberts

01628 636984

rosemary.roberts@noda.org.uk

Grand Opera Advisor

Bryan Kesselman

020 8868 8921

bryan.kesselman@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor

Ann Hertler-Smith

01923 267604

ann.hertler-smith@noda.org.uk

Conference Co-ordinator

Bob Borrow

020 8529 6377

bob.borrow@noda.org.uk

Conference Technical

Co-ordinator

Sam Webb

07899 992772

sam.webb@noda.org.uk

Councillor's Comments

The London regional conference took place at Wylllyotts

Centre in July. It really was an exceptional turnout this year and

a wonderful atmosphere in which to celebrate all our achievements. We were very pleased to welcome President Bert Lumsden and his wife Anne, who presented all the awards and who wrote afterwards to say what a super day they had spent with us.

Thanks to the generosity of societies, this year we have added three new awards: the Comedy Award, the Innovation Award (which can cover any area of amateur dramatics) and the Sylvia Rawlings Lifetime Achievement Award. The latter award was donated by

Bromley Players in memory of one of their most outstanding and long serving members. This is one of the few awards where nomination is solely by societies, and we were really impressed with both the number of nominations and what was written. It is quite humbling to read of the unstinting work and support that people give

so selflessly to their societies.

The conference also hosted two workshops, one called 'Singing Sondheim' and a drama workshop on Shakespeare, plus a discussion group session on NODA called 'The Way Forward', which gave members an opportunity for a question and answer session with both London committee members and other societies.

We are very lucky to have such a thriving membership within the London region. Long may it continue!

Jacquie Stedman

Councillor, NODA London



British Airways Cabin Crew Entertainment Society

London Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1

Tony Sweeney

020 8654 0682

anthony.sweeney@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2

Zena Wigram

01895 636028

zena.wigram@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 3

Stephen Macvicar

07767 822385

stephen.macvicar@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 4

Darren Knight

07891 326568

darren.knight@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 5

Please refer to Councillor

DISTRICT 6

Andrew Rogers

020 8508 9635

andrew.rogers@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 7

Paul M Holgate

020 8804 9553

paul.holgate@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 8

Tony Austin

01895 634288

tony.austin@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 9

Bill Baynes

020 8428 0533

bill.baynes@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 10

Sarah Buttler

020 8386 2999

sarah.buttler@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 11

Maggy Collins

01296 331588

maggy.collins@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 11a

Judith Watsham

01494 774557

judith.watsham@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 12

Rob Bertwistle

01235 764 075

rob.bertwistle@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 13

Jeanette Maskell

01635 41791

jeanette.maskell@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 14

Gordon Bird

01189 662934

gordon.bird@noda.org.uk

Meet our new London reps

Ever wondered why people volunteer for the job of a NODA rep? The London region has recently acquired several new reps and we thought it would be interesting to find out what prompted them to take on the role.



Andrew Rogers District 6

When I heard our district rep was planning to give up the role because she was moving out of the area, it immediately triggered an interest in me. Having recently stepped

down as chairman of my local group after seven years, I was looking for the next challenge within amateur dramatics and this seemed like the perfect opportunity. Whilst still hoping to be performing and directing with my group going forward, I believed that I would have the time to carry out the district rep role as well.

My own group has only recently begun to make the most of our NODA membership and I wondered if other groups in the area were similarly not fully engaged. I also know there are several groups in the area who are not even NODA members. I felt I wanted to bring all the benefits of NODA membership to both existing and new member groups. I also felt that with over 30 years of performing, directing and backstage work in amateur drama, as well as having chaired my local group, I should be well placed to offer constructive show reports and advice to the member groups in my district. I know the problems, issues and also the great delights that amateur drama brings.

In this increasingly regulated world, I know that amateur groups will need guidance in areas such as working with children, using weapons and even smoking on stage. Licence issues also still seem to

trip groups up, with shows being videoed, scenes cut and shows even sometimes almost rewritten – all typically in breach of the legal licensing agreement. NODA must continue to advise and caution where necessary and I hope to be able to play a role here.

Theatre and performing has been a love of mine all my life, having first appeared as a dog dressed in pyjamas to open my elocution class annual show at the age of three or four. School drama followed, but it was on leaving school that I started performing with both local and work groups. Over the years, I have been fortunate to be part of some wonderful shows and seen some great work done by every member of a show's cast and crew.

I also frequently attend professional shows, with real highlights this year being the first night of *Charles III*, the powerful *Skylight* and the magical *To Kill a Mockingbird* at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre. Living close to London gives one a great opportunity to enjoy such a feast of shows but also to see the standards we should all be aiming for in amateur productions. We should be professional in all but not being paid for what we do!



Rob Bertwistle District 12

Now just why did I become a NODA rep? It was quite by chance really. One day late last year I was talking to a friend who knew that my region's current rep wished to stand down.

"I wouldn't mind having a go at that", I heard myself saying (foolishly?) and things are now, as they say, history. I have taken over the reins from the very capable hands of Gareth Jeremy who has served the region for more than twenty years. I hope I can continue his good work.

Actually, Gareth and I go back a long way, appearing in *My Fair Lady* together for Banbury Operatic Society in the early 80s. However, that did not stop my fear and dread when I knew he was coming to review a show in which I was appearing! So I know that it is a big responsibility to give a positive yet (hopefully) constructive review of a show. But, and it's a big but, it is only ever one person's view point and should be taken in that spirit.

I have written a couple of reports now (having taken over officially in July this year) and it is quite a responsibility to make sure all aspects are reasonably covered because so much time, effort and commitment goes into producing a show, be it large or small.

My own credentials are fairly modest but none the less worthy, I hope. I have been treading the boards since the age of nine, studied to become a music teacher and did this for 28 years, and been a member of various societies and am dram groups along the way. I've been lucky enough to have played many leading roles and have also donned my director's hat on several occasions, so I think I have quite a wealth of experience and knowledge to draw upon.

Thanks to all who have made me so welcome and I hope I can serve my region and groups to the best of my ability. Wish me luck! ★

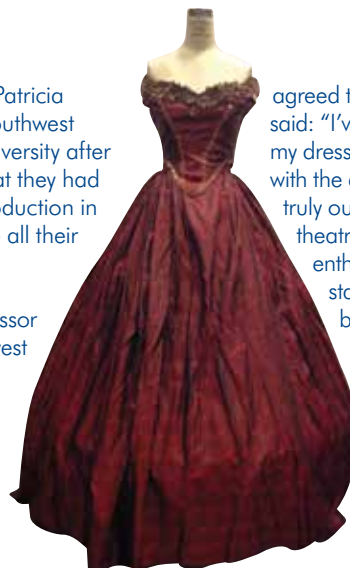
Costumes travel from Minnesota to Wandsworth for local play

It's the perfect combination of nineteenth century dresses and twenty-first century social media!

Costumes made in Minnesota, USA, were flown across the Atlantic to dress the cast of a play being put on by Wandsworth drama group New Stagers in July. *The Heiress*, a play about love and revenge in 1850s New York, had the group searching high and low for the right dresses until Twitter came to the rescue.

The play's director, Patricia Driver, contacted Southwest Minnesota State University after seeing on Twitter that they had put on the same production in April and had made all their own costumes.

Sheila Tabaka, Professor of Theatre at Southwest Minnesota State University, who



agreed to lend the group the costumes, said: "I've never been to London, but two of my dresses will be going. As far as working with the amazing folks at New Stagers, it is truly our honour. It is another testament to theatre people everywhere. We are an enthusiastic, resourceful bunch. When we started taking pictures of the costumes being made and posting them on Twitter to garner audience attention, we never thought two months later they'd be flying to the UK." ★



regionalroundup North

Northallerton Operatic Society turns sixty

North Committee

Councillor
Gordon Richardson
0191 586 6350
gordon.richardson@noda.org.uk

Treasurer
Derek Coleman
derek.coleman@noda.org.uk

Regional Secretary
Pauline Swann
pauline.swann@noda.org.uk

Awards Secretary
Fred Piggford
fred.piggford@noda.org.uk

Membership Secretary
Ian M Wells
ian.wells@noda.org.uk

Webmaster
Gordon Richardson
gordon.richardson@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor
Michelle Coulson
michelle.coulson@noda.org.uk

Regional Editor
Gordon Smyrell
gordon.smyrell@noda.org.uk

North Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1
Jim Graham
jim.graham@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2
Foster Johnson
foster.johnson@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 3
Michelle Coulson
michelle.coulson@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 4
Peter Oliver
peter.oliver@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 5
Michael L. Avery
michael.avery@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 6
Peter Parlour
peter.parlour@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 8
Alistair Bolton
alistair.bolton@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 9
Kathryn Curry
kathryn.curry@noda.org.uk

Northallerton Operatic Society was originally formed before the war and was revived in 1954 by Tom Gerrard (TG) Wilson, who had previously been involved with amateur societies in Brighouse and the Huddersfield area, as well as being organist of Northallerton Parish Church. In 1954 the people of Northallerton were invited, encouraged and cajoled into joining the reformed Northallerton Operatic Society.

A committee was formed with John Gatenby as Chairman, and Sir Thomas Dugdale and Lady Dugdale became the society's first presidents, with Dr Arthur Bull as MD and TG as producer. Their first production of *The Gondoliers* opened at the Lyric Cinema in November 1954 and ran for three nights, and the programme included this important message: "The society exists for the study and production of light opera and musical plays and hopes to attract those interested in the stage. More gentlemen for the chorus will be especially welcomed." Sixty years on our aim is still unchanged and so is our shortage of men for the chorus!

The Gondoliers was followed in 1955 by *The Mikado* and in 1956 by *Iolanthe*. In 1958 *Rose Marie* was staged, followed by *The Merry Widow*, *Student Prince* and other classics such as *Carousel* and *Oklahoma!*.

In 1968 the society lost the use of the Lyric Cinema and in 1969 *No No Nannette* was staged at Bedale County Modern School. At this stage Joy Beadel was producer and Frank Murray the MD. In 1975 the society moved into the newly built Hambleton Community Centre, where they still perform today. The building is now called The Forum and is run mainly by volunteers.

The society has a very good following and celebrates their diamond jubilee with a variety of musical numbers from around the world, a musical journey containing well known songs from the cinema and stage.

Over the years the society has had the good fortune to have had the services of Edith Stone, who was secretary for a few years, and Bob Barrett, who succeeded Frank Murray as MD and held that position for quite a few years. The quality of their productions is such that nearly every show is a sell out, which gives the committee great encouragement in choosing future productions. The people of Northallerton are very lucky to have a society in their midst that produces shows of such a high standard. ★

Peter Parlour & Maureen Willoughby

Spennymoor member is youth mayor

Ryan Chatt, a 17 year old member of Spennymoor Stage and Song, has recently been appointed the role of youth mayor in his home town.

Ryan, who ultimately wishes to go into politics, said of the appointment: "It has been one of the best things that has happened to me and still continues to be. It has opened many doors and further opportunities that I would not have had otherwise, including those not related to our youth council. I've officially opened events, met important people and even danced to the 60s with the deputy town mayor!



Alongside volunteering with many other groups and organisations, I'd say this is one of the greatest things I've done. Some of my other duties are regularly attending council meetings, working alongside the town mayor and most notably being a good voice for young people. Though

there are many advantages to this role, there is one difficulty that only rises after a year of service – being elected again!" ★

Mining disaster remembered by new play

Vane Tempest Theatre Group this year presented the premiere of *The Bitter Taste of Coal*, a new musical play which was three years in the making. It recounts the moving events leading up to and during the 1880 Seaham Colliery disaster, which claimed the lives of 164 miners. It also made its premiere as part of the opening celebrations of the new Seaham Town Hall.

The play is written by two men from the town, Steve English, an ex miner and mines rescue specialist, and Mick Smith, a songwriter and producer. Mick is also a descendant of one of the men who died in the disaster, who left his family a message on the side of a water bottle as he was fatally trapped underground.

This tough, funny and ultimately tragic story, told in the accent of the town and the pit community, shows the lives of the mining community using songs to underline the powerful feelings of the men and their families. This musical play was written to memorialise the personal and social history of the Durham miners and to help keep their stories alive. ★



↑ Winners of the adult and youth councillor's awards
↓ (L-R) Councillor Gordon Richardson, BBC Tees' Alex Hall, Grace Moor, Bert Lumsden and Regional Rep Alistair Bolton



NODA NORTH AWARDS SPECIAL

The Rainton Meadows Arena, Houghton-le-Spring, provided host on 13th September to NODA North's second annual youth and performance awards, attended by almost 500 members from as far north as Berwick and as far south as Hawes. Our guests for the evening were then National President Bert Lumsden and his wife Anne, as well as local BBC Tees radio presenter Alex Hall.

Regional Councillor Gordon Richardson welcomed all present before each district's regional rep read out the citations of each of their nominees and the eventual winners were presented by the President. Tension was high throughout the arena and winners and nominees were equally proud to have been recognised for their talents.

The winner of the Youth Award Councillor's Shield was 16 year old Rhiann Quinn for her role as 'Tommy the Cat' in Dryburn Theatrical Workshop's production of *Dick Whittington*, a role that saw her command

the stage without actually uttering a word throughout the whole production. In the adult category the winner of the Councillor's Cup was Teesside MTC's production of *The Producers*, which had the audience in stitches of laughter from start to finish whilst using very effective visual projections to aid the production.

The electric atmosphere continued well after all of the awards and thanks were delivered. The regional committee are now already planning for next year's awards ceremony! ★

Make up masterclass

With most societies and groups now back into rehearsals, Raymond Wood of Mr Monds Avant Garde Makeup Studio came into Utopia Costumes to turn some of our staff members into this year's most popular leading ladies.



(L-R) Delores Van Cartier, Tracey Turnblad, Motormouth Maybelle



Delores Van Cartier

Cheeks: Contour the cheeks, forehead and chin using a bronzer and overlay the apple of the cheek with vibrant wine red blusher.

Eyes: Using a black eyeliner and fake lashes we emphasised the eyes with a wash of purple and charcoal shimmer eyeshadow to create a smoky eye, and used a pencil to create the shape of the eyebrow.

Lips: We used a wine red lip liner to make the shape of the mouth, filled in the lips with a matching lipstick and finished off with gloss.

Tracey Turnblad

Cheeks: Soft pinks and light shimmering highlight the apple of the cheek to create a plump, youthful blush.

Eyes: Using a black eyeliner and fake lashes we emphasised the eyes with a wash of brown eyeshadow and a cream coloured highlight, and used a pencil to create the shape of the eyebrow.

Lips: Soft pink lip liner was used to make the shape of the mouth, which was filled in with a matching lipstick and finished off with gloss.

Motormouth Maybelle

Cheeks: Contour the cheeks, forehead and chin using a bronzer and overlay the apple of the cheek with vibrant pink.

Eyes: Using a black eyeliner and fake lashes we emphasised the eyes with a wash of gold shimmer eyeshadow and a cream coloured highlight, and used a pencil to create the shape of the eyebrow.

Lips: Soft pink lip liner was used to make the shape of the mouth, which was filled in with a baby pink lipstick and finished off with gloss.



From this (left), to this (below)!



The creation of Edna Turnblad

- 1.) Highlight the cheekbones, bridge of the nose, chin and brow bone with a pale cream foundation. Next, contour the hollow of the cheek, the sides of the nose and the temple of the head with a darker cream foundation.
- 2.) Blend the dark and light areas together with foundation that is similar to the actor's skin tone and use a fixing powder to set.
- 3.) Wash the eye with a neutral tone and use a deeper shade in the crease of the eyelid and down into the eyeline to give a smoky eye effect. Use a light almost white tone under the eyebrow and on the lid to highlight and create depth. Use an eyebrow pencil to draw on strong eyebrows as this helps to feminise. Use black eyeliner to extend the eyes and thick false eyelashes to lengthen.

- 4.) Use a wash of soft pink on the temple, down over the cheekbones and into the apple of the cheek. Using a deeper red, brush into the hollow and use a highlighter to create shimmer over the apple of the cheek.



- 5.) Pop on your padding, a frock, some bling and a wig to finish the illusion.



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Protecting Amateur Theatre

Production Safety Checklist

NODASafe and NODA Insurance have created this handy production safety checklist to help ensure that your society's shows are enjoyable *and* safe! Pull it out and make sure you use it for your next production.

Production name

Date of production

Stage Manager

Director

Initial Actions 3 – 6 months before production	✓ or N/A	Comments
1. Book venue (please include venue details in comments box)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Arrange meeting with production staff at venue (date and details in comments box)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Ask venue to supply theatre risk assessment, fire risk assessment, and public and employer liability insurance. Copies seen and filed in production folder.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Check on society insurance certificates. Copies filed in production folder. Ensure your indemnity cover limits are sufficient for the forthcoming performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Hold initial production meeting with director, producer and any other significant persons. Follow production overview form.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Complete production meeting notes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. When rehearsals start ensure that induction is completed for all cast and crew as per stage manager induction checklist.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Any other notes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Intermediate Actions One month before production	✓ or N/A	Comments
9. Review previous production meeting notes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. Hold production meeting with director, producer and any other significant persons. Follow production meeting checklist.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11. Complete production meeting notes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
12. Check with venue for any significant changes since risk assessments received. Note in comments box.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13. Complete production risk assessment as per guidance from NODASafe.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14. Any significant findings or additional controls required to be communicated to the director and producer, and if required, to the venue.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
15. Review and update production overview form.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Production One week before	✓ or N/A	Comments
16. Check that risk assessments have been completed and all controls are in place.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
17. Hold a briefing with stage crew (outline hazards and risks, programme of events, work schedule, and risk assessments and controls).	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18. Brief the cast at the rehearsal venue with an outline of the programme of events when at the venue.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Dress/Technical Rehearsal	✓ or N/A	Comments
19. Check that risk assessments have been completed and controls are in place.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
20. Ensure that sign in sheets for venue are completed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
21. Carry out a hazard spotting exercise around the performance and backstage areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
22. Check venue for fire fighting equipment and ensure designated fire wardens have been appointed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
23. Check for first aid provision (accident sheets in production file, first aid box and first aiders in place).	<input type="checkbox"/>	
24. Brief stage crew on duties and show them around the theatre. Point out hazards, controls, first aid and fire provision.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
25. Carry out cast and orchestra briefing as per stage manager induction checklist.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
26. Ensure all activities (scenery erection, working at height) are performed safely as per the risk assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
27. Complete show report and file in production file.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Performances	✓ or N/A						Comments
Fill in for each performance	1	2	3	4	5	6	
28. Check that risk assessment has been completed and controls are in place.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
29. Ensure that sign in sheets for the venue are completed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
30. Carry out a hazard spotting exercise around the performance and backstage areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
31. Check for first aid provision (accident sheets in production file, first aid box and first aiders in place).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
32. Check venue for fire fighting equipment and ensure designated fire wardens are in place.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
33. Ensure all activities (scenery erection, working at height) are performed safely and as per the risk assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
34. Complete show report and file in production file.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Signed Stage Manager Director Date

This checklist, along with any documents referred to within it, can be found on the NODASafe pages of the NODA website at www.noda.org.uk/nodasafemembers. If you need help or advice with any aspect of this checklist, please get in touch with NODASafe on **0345 257 6632** or email nodasafe@noda.org.uk.

If you would like to get in touch with NODA Insurance about your society's cover, call them on **0845 130 1368*** or go to www.nodainsurance.co.uk.

*An alternative telephone number is 01823 250 700. Calls may be recorded for use in quality management, training and customer support.



The making of 'Disaster at the Vicarage'

Using the production checklist

Planning, in all walks of life, can ensure that your end result is achieved and, if done correctly, with a little less stress and pain along the way. So it is true in theatre. I am sure, like me, you have been involved in productions where some important things were left to the last minute and various people ended up running around, frantically trying to arrange for some prop to be used and figuring out how that 'special effect' will work. The production checklist is a simple way of collecting those vital bits of information for your show and prompting you to take action in a timely fashion. The checklists will naturally vary from production to production and from society to society, however there are some basic pieces of information and known issues that everyone will have in common. The production checklist document is designed to help as you go through your production process instead of leaving yourself open to last minute questions and issues.

The document allows you to capture production meeting notes, insurance details, venue contact information, risk assessment from the venue (significant findings), fire risk assessment details, and anything else that you may require. The key to success is doing all of these things early enough so that you are proactive rather than reactive, and therefore, by the time your production is ready for performance, you are *implementing* plans, not making them up as you go along! This all sounds very obvious but (we make no apologies for saying this) **it is!**

How does this link up with health and safety and the prevention of accidents? Quite simply, better prepared shows have fewer accidents. Issues have been identified, planned for and communicated to all the necessary people and therefore dealt with. Please try using it – you have nothing to lose and much to gain with

an orderly plan for your production that leaves nothing to chance. You can download copies from the members' area on the NODA website, along with a number of other documents on safety.

Online health and safety training

In autumn 2014, NODA is launching a new way to help you and your society acquire relevant training and instruction. Each NODA member society will have access to the new NODASafe health and safety online training course. The course includes the following areas: roles and responsibilities, including a video on induction and communication / production planning; hazard spotting and risk assessment, including an innovative theatre hazard spotting video; and accident procedures, with a video on how to handle a particularly difficult incident. There are other videos within the course that deal with basic working at height information and manual handling within the theatre. Included within the online learning will be all the NODASafe documents that you can use to help with your production, including the production checklist detailed above.

In partnership with NODASafe there is also a freely available (via the NODA website and YouTube) video presentation of a farce called *Disaster at the Vicarage*, which catalogues some familiar theatrical safety issues. This amusing short film will resonate with NODA members as it is all based on real life incidents that NODA Insurance have dealt with over the past few years. This training is part of your society subscription, so we hope that you will use and benefit from it.

Neil Maidman

Senior Safety Consultant, NODASafe

The importance of **teamwork** for a stage manager

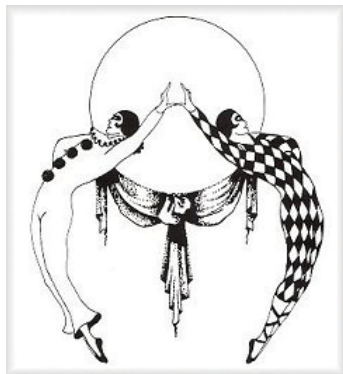
Graham Coulson, General Manager of scenery supplier The Border Studio, discusses the importance of teamwork for every stage manager. The Border Studio is NODA's recommended scenery supplier for *The Slipper and the Rose*.

I do hope that all of you have had a good summer break and have managed to find some 'you time' before the season starts back with a vengeance.

Time now to look at building a small team around your role as stage manager. Why do I say small I hear your say? I guess one size does not fit all occasions when working within the world of theatre; however, in my view, it is important to have the right sized team to support both yourself and the needs of the production.

There are many factors that come into play when you turn your thoughts to the production that you have agreed to stage manage. For example, the size of the performance venue and complexities of the production set, along with various questions about the venue staff and who else you require.

For me the starting point would be to look at myself as the stage manager (words like handsome, agile and buff immediately spring to mind). I jest of course, but on a more serious note, in my opinion, as stage manager you have to decide your main role while the production is up and running. Will that be to oversee, run the corner or be the props master? Once you have decided your main role then you can start to gather other people around you, people who you know are well committed to the production, have the time and the necessary skill



set, are team players, have good people skills and above all have a sense of fun!

Again in all of this we have to remember that most people will be volunteering to be part of that elite group of people known as 'the stage crew'. I hear you questioning whether they are an elite group, but I am sure you have come across those individuals who once they have a power drill in their hands, well there is just no stopping them. I stress the point about being a volunteer as many factors will impact upon how your team will gel and work together. It will be very important for you as stage manager to ensure that your team feels valued by all those individuals involved with the production in the run up to opening night. In my experience

of amateur theatre, most people think that they are the most important person in the production and that nobody else matters apart from themselves.

This is wrong everyone, and nothing will happen unless everyone, from the actors to the front of house staff, from the musicians to the wardrobe team, from the director to the sound and lighting engineers, and of course you and your team, work together to produce the icing on the cake.

Well I hope this has given you some food for thought - no pun intended (well maybe) - and until the next time may I wish you all well in whatever you may be involved with this coming season.

Best wishes for the autumn and as ever kind regards. ★

Aye
Graham



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North East

North East Committee

Councillor

David Streeter

0114 235 2490

david.streeter@noda.org.uk

Regional Secretary

Judy McMurray

0114 236 2430

judy.mcmurray@noda.org.uk

Regional Treasurer

Geoff Haywood

01226 724925

geoff.haywood@noda.org.uk

Membership Secretary

John Parsons

01724 334931

john.parsons@noda.org.uk

Web Manager

Bryan Craven

0113 252 2514

bryan.craven@noda.org.uk

Long Service Awards Secretary

Pamela Booth

01943 430318

pamela.booth@noda.org.uk

Magazine/News Editor

Julie Webb

0114 255 1869

julie.webb@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor

Vacant

Please contact Regional Councillor

North East Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1

Terry Harrison

01423 870656

terry.harrison@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2

Rosie Abel

07799 832766

rosalie.abel@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 3

Tony Harris

01377 272063

tony.harris@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 4

John Parsons

01724 334931

john.parsons@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 5

Leslie Smith

01226 756654

leslie.smith@noda.org.uk

Councillor's Comments

By the time everyone is reading this, the year's NODA Annual General Meeting and Presidential Gala will have taken place in East Grinstead. This event is important because of the AGM but also because we welcomed South East Councillor John Barnes as the incoming NODA National President. We also welcomed current NODA Chair of Trustees Chris Ingram as Vice President. This will mean, all things being well, that Chris will become the NODA National President during the autumn of 2015. I'm sure that we all wish Chris well as he moves towards the Presidency. In early 2015 we will let everyone know how we intend to hold the AGM and inauguration celebrations in the North East.

In the North East we are just about to start another cycle of district meetings. They have been held over previous years but it is fair to say that attendance is variable. These meetings, which usually embrace several districts, are an opportunity for me and the district representatives to ensure that you are up to date with NODA services. It is also an opportunity for you to let me know what you want from the Association. I can't promise to get everything done, but I can ensure that you have a voice. In addition, these events allow time for networking conversations between various society members. You never know, it may lead to mutual benefit. So when you receive details of the district meeting near you, please

come along, either by yourself or as a society group. Everyone is welcome.

The 2014 NODA Summer School is now over and was once again a success and enjoyed by all attendees. Please be reminded that within the region we are able to grant several bursaries (£300 for each successful bursary application) that can be used to partly offset NODA Summer School fees. It hurts me to say that bursary applications for the year just completed were not fully allocated due to the low number of applications. This is a pity as I really support this scheme. The bursary application criteria is on the NODA website, but in essence it allows further individual training (both onstage and backstage skills) that will develop individuals and allow them to bring back those enhanced skills to their societies. So let's see all those bursary applications at the end of the year to ensure that the budget is spent on developing North East talent and skills.

We have a vacancy for a Youth Advisor (or perhaps multiple advisors, as we can consider splitting the region geographically) due to Giles Atkinson's resignation, as he needs to focus on his profession. Giles has served the region well over the years and I thank him for his efforts. We are now looking to fill the gap. Please contact me or your regional representative and further details can be provided. ★

David Streeter

Councillor, NODA North East

DISTRICT 6

Mary Titterton

0114 236 8619

mary.titterton@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 7

Noel Rigg

01924 466659

noel.rigg@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 8

Jean Taylor

01422 376058

david.streeter@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 9

Christine Castle

0113 2664672

christine.castle@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 10

Jacqui Hartley

01422 321513

jacqui.hartley@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 11

Sally Holmes

0113 2192095

sally.holmes@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 12

Judith Smith

01274 568305

judith.smith@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 13

Geoff Haywood

01226 724925

geoff.haywood@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 14

Julie Webb

0114 2551869

julie.webb@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 15

Pamela Booth

01943 430318

pamela.booth@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 16

Marguerite Jennings

01423 797714

marguerite.jennings@noda.org.uk

Knaresborough Players at the Frazer

How an enthusiastic group of amateur actors started from scratch and 50 years on are well established in their own theatre. Extract from 'Fifty Years at the Frazer' by Bernie Crosthwaite.

In January 1962 the group met to set up a local drama society, calling it the Knaresborough Players. The main problem was that there was not a theatre in the town, only draughty church halls, and none of which were ideal for drama. So the Players became nomads. The very first production, *The Happiest Days of Your Life*, took place at the Holy Trinity Church Hall in May 1962. An ambitious programme for the next year went ahead: a variety show in June, a three act play in November and their first pantomime in February 1964.

At the same time the Elephant and Castle Hotel and its nearby ballroom were being put up for sale in two lots and were sold in May 1963. The hotel was sold to a London property company but the new owner of the ballroom, Frederick Frazer, a local business man, offered it to local organisations at a peppercorn rent in order to make the town a livelier place. The Players went ahead and hired the ballroom as a venue and on Monday 10th February 1964 opened with *Robinson Crusoe*.

In June that year the Players opened negotiations with Mr Frazer with a view to taking over the ballroom. He offered it to them on the same terms as he had offered the Council (who refused the

offer). It would be their responsibility to decorate and furnish the hall but the cost of alterations would be shared by Mr Frazer and the Players. Sadly, Mr Frazer died suddenly in November 1965 aged 55. The Players renamed the ballroom in his memory and it remains the Frazer Theatre to this day.

In January 1980 the Players applied to the Trust, which owned the theatre, for the go-ahead to make further improvements, to be told that they could no longer lease the venue at a nominal rent. So the Players made the monumental decision to buy the building for the asking price of £12,500. There began a frantic year of fundraising. In May 1981 the deeds were signed and the Players were now the official owners of the Frazer Theatre. Since then the theatre has received many more improvements to make it comfortable and pleasant, with an attractive programme of events during the year. They are well supported by the local community and other societies in the area.

The Players are currently in the process of becoming a limited company while retaining their charitable status. Membership stands at a healthy 60 and fundraising continues, with major developments to the roof and the upgrading of land around the theatre required. Running a theatre and putting on shows is a huge team effort, as everyone involved with amateur theatre knows, and the Knaresborough Players is a great example of what can be achieved by hard work and dedication. ★



President Margaret Sheard and her husband John Sheard (Stage Manager) accept the NODA Centenary Certificate from Bert Lumsden on behalf of Batley Amateur Thespian Society.



Reg Vinnicombe

It was with deep sadness that the North East region learned of the passing of Past President Reg Vinnicombe in February this year.

I think the following words sum up this larger than life man and doyen of amateur theatre, particularly in the North East region of NODA.

Feel no guilt in laughter, he'd know how much we care.

Feel no sorrow in a smile that he is not here to share.

We cannot grieve forever, he would not want us to.

He'd hope that we would carry on the way we always do.

So, talk about the good times and the way we showed we cared.

The days we spent together, all the happiness we shared.

Let memories surround us, a word someone may say

Will suddenly recapture a time, an hour, a day

That brings him back as clearly as though he were still here

And fills us with the feeling that he is always near.

Reg and I both became involved with NODA in 1983, he as regional representative for what is now District 11 and me as regional secretary. In 1991 Reg became North East Councillor and we became partners in crime, organising the region's gala weekend in Bridlington. It rose from an attendance of about 350 to over 1,000 by the time Reg was installed as President of the Association in 2001, when we also took on the planning of Reg's presidential weekend. What more can I say than that those 10 years of administration were some of the happiest of my amateur theatre life.

Both as regional representative and Councillor, Reg always had the membership at heart and was welcomed wherever he visited. Every group was given his undivided attention and they in turn enjoyed the exceptional warmth of his personality.

Mary Titterton

Regional Representative, District 6



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North West

North West Committee

Councillor
Christine Hunter Hughes
01772 728817
christine.hunterhughes@noda.org.uk

Regional Secretary
Joan Carnaffin
01539 720172
joan.carnaffin@noda.org.uk

Regional Treasurer
Trevor Mills
01477 534843
trevor.mills@noda.org.uk

Web Manager
Ian Johnston
01900 66209
ian.johnston@noda.org.uk

Awards Secretary
Colin Magenty
01942 679606
colin.magenty@noda.org.uk

Magazine/News Editor
Anna Mansell
07971 193616
anna.mansell@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor
Jenny King
0151 639 4189
jenny.king@noda.org.uk

North West Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1
Kevin Proctor
07771 961865
kevin.proctor@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2
Eddie Regan
01772 453885
eddie.regan@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 3
David Slater
01282 423079

DISTRICT 4
Budge Grounsell
0151 639 8328
budge.grounsell@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 5
Jackie Kay
01204 852410
jackie.kay@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 6
Pat Connor
01257 277615
pat.connor@noda.org.uk



Experience one of the most enjoyable weeks of your life

After the NODA North West reps were kind enough to offer me a bursary for a second year running, I have recently completed my week at NODA Theatre Summer School 2014. After thoroughly enjoying myself last year, I just had to return! Although I study Musical Theatre at university, I picked the Musical Theatre course at Summer School (this being one of the many courses that are available).

This year the Musical Theatre course was 'Avenue Q'. Having never worked with puppets before I was easily shown how to control a puppet and make it seem believable, and we actually got to work with the real puppets from the show. As well as the puppets, I also had a lot of work done to my vocals, including many different solo and duet singing classes, and individual work on my chosen solo song.

In such a short space of time I learnt a lot of different skills and techniques that I can now take back to my theatre group and also to university. I would highly recommend anyone to go to NODA Theatre Summer School - it really is for all ages and there are a number of different courses to choose from, even if it isn't something that you think you would enjoy. I promise your expectations will be

changed within a matter of hours.

I guarantee you that the experiences you gain in the week will be worth it. Whether that's the evening classes they run which are completely different to the course you study in the day, the friends and tutors you meet along the way (who I promise will be friends forever), the luxury accommodation you stay in, or the three meals and tea/coffee services provided throughout the day.

Not only this, but there's also extra-curricular events such as a themed night and karaoke. As well as it being a great week to gain skills and meet new friends, it is also a great chance to let your hair down (like a holiday) and enjoy a bit of socialising after your classes with anyone and everyone, because everyone is so friendly it is almost impossible not to make friends.

Having only attended NODA Theatre Summer School twice, I have already met lots of friends and gained so much experience that has really helped me as a performer over the years. I most definitely will be returning next year because it is definitely worth the money for probably one of the most enjoyable weeks of your life! ★

Tom Townsend

DISTRICT 7
Sharon Drummond
01706 854208
sharon.drummond@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 8
Peter Johnson
01270 215328
peter.johnson@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 10
Ed McGee
01900 603050
ed.mcgee@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 11
Katharine Carradus
01539 725908
katharine.carradus@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 12
Lloyd Bamber & Luke Taberer
Luke: 07906 358645
Lloyd: 07971 544242
lloyd.luke@noda.org.uk

Heritage Lottery Fund supports local war production

Members of Oswaldtwistle Players are commemorating a key part of their local history, thanks to a £3,000 Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant.

As many societies mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War by presenting the Peter Whelan play *The Accrington Pals*, for the East Lancashire drama group the story has extra poignancy. While men signed up across the country to fight in the war, one of the local recruitment offices for the celebrated Accrington Pals Battalion was situated in Oswaldtwistle Town Hall, which is now the Civic Arts Centre and Civic Theatre, where the players stage their productions.

The £3,000 grant from the HLF's 'First World War: then and now' programme is supporting the Players in researching and sourcing historically accurate uniforms, costumes, props and artefacts, and the creation of a commemorative brochure. The Players are also setting up an exhibition in the theatre, using photographs, newspaper clippings, documents, letters and photos of keepsakes, as well as family stories, to build a clear picture of the enormous and long lasting impact of World War One on a small town.

Oswaldtwistle lies just over a mile from central Accrington, and many Pals, or members of the 11th East Lancashire Regiment, were recruited there to the First World War effort early on in response to Kitchener's call for a volunteer army. The



amassed troop of friends and relatives from the area suffered devastating losses on 1st July 1916, which was the opening day of the Battle of the Somme.

The Players have previously performed Whelan's acclaimed play at the Civic Theatre and as a recorded drama for BBC Radio Lancashire, and received a message of support for their centenary production from Whelan before his death this summer.

The Players now aim to preserve the memories and heritage of the lost generation of local men and boys who marched off to war, so many of whom were never to return, leaving the women of the town to carry on life without their fathers, brothers, husbands and sweethearts.

Oswaldtwistle Players' chairperson Clare Highton said: "We are thrilled to have received the support of the HLF and are dedicated to making *The Accrington Pals* play an amazing experience for everyone involved in the production and for everyone who comes to see it."

Sara Hilton, head of HLF North West, said: "The impact of the First World War was far reaching, touching and shaping every corner of the UK and beyond. These grants enable local communities to explore and record their wartime history, and in Oswaldtwistle's case, bring it to life through drama in a highly resonant local building, commemorating the many people from Accrington and Oswaldtwistle who were affected by the conflict." ★



Councillor's Comments

A date for your diary – we have booked next year's AGM and annual awards presentation. The youth day and awards will be held on Saturday 2nd May, and the AGM and adult awards will be held on Sunday 3rd and Monday 4th May. We are returning once more to The Mercure Hotel, Manchester Piccadilly, so any thoughts you have on the weekend or any suggestions for the year ahead would be most welcome.

Another date to note is midnight of 1st

December, as that is when bookings open for NODA Theatre Summer School 2015. I already know you are all passionate about theatre and if you have not attended before I really would urge you to consider it. I was fortunate enough to attend for a day this year for a taster session and suffice it to say I am going next year! Unfortunately the taster is only for regional committee members, so as not to interrupt the courses with too many visitors, but if you want to find out more do please talk to your regional rep or me.

Sharing his experience at Summer School in this edition of the magazine is Tom Townsend, who attended this year. I would be the first to say that on the face

of it, it looks expensive at around £585 (price for 2014). However, please remember that price includes all your excellent meals, tea and coffee each day, high quality accommodation and professional training, which would normally cost in the region of £400 per day! However, I have saved the best bit of information until last. In the North West we have four bursaries available to anyone who has not been to Summer School before. The bursary is £300, so half the course is paid for. Please talk to me about bursaries and I hope to see you at Summer School in 2015.

Christine Hunter Hughes
Councillor, NODA North West



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Scotland Committee

Councillor
Gordon T Blackburn
0131 312 6644
gordon.blackburn@noda.org.uk

Web Manager
Stuart Dick
01698 253706
stuart.dick@noda.org.uk

Magazine/News Editor
Alan C Jones
0141 633 0544
alan.jones@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor
Craig Inglis
07751 642521
craig.inglis@noda.org.uk

Scotland Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1
Ian M. Gray
0141 942 5755
ian.gray@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2
Roger Buist
01382 739743
roger.buist@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 3
Elizabeth Donald
01324 637791
elizabeth.donald@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 4
T. Davies Brock
01292 441199
davies.brock@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 5
David Black
01698 459479
david.black@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 6
Dorothy Johnstone
0131 445 4685
dorothy.johnstone@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 7
Mike Pendrowski
01383 623708
mike.pendrowski@noda.org.uk

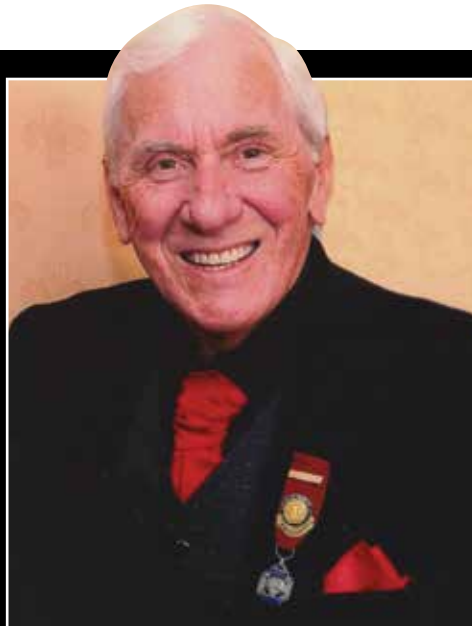
DISTRICT 8
Deborah Lyons
01450 377577
deborah.lyons@noda.org.uk

Obituary: Brian W. Stewart

It is with great sadness that we at Kelty Musical Association have lost our Life President Brian W. Stewart, who passed away on Thursday 17th July.

Brian was a member of Kelty Musical Association for over 60 years, during which time he took many leading roles before moving on to the production team, where he had a spell as musical director then took over as producer, which he did very successfully for many years. He also served on the committee, as Vice President and as President for over 20 years. In 2012 he handed over the presidency to Kevin Keir, his then Vice President. He was then made Honorary Life President.

Musical theatre was Brian's life with KMA, which was like his second family. Brian's own family have followed in Brian's footsteps and are all life members of the company. His wife Ella, who he met through KMA whilst she was a dancer, has also taken many major principal roles over the years, but now stays on the other side of the footlights and is our current Vice President and bookings manager.



His daughter Lynne worked alongside her father for many years as choreographer before taking over as producer of the company. His son Clark also had a short spell in the producer's chair and is now a professional entertainer on cruise ships. He was also in the professional pantomime in the Pavilion Theatre in Glasgow this year.

Brian's dedication and loyalty to Kelty Musical Association is legendary. He will most definitely be missed. He was the godfather of the society and a man well respected by all the members. ★

Joyce Clark
Secretary, Kelty Musical Association

DISTRICT 9
Douglas Clark
01569 766169
douglas.clark@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 10
Ron Stewart
01356 622324
ron.stewart@noda.org.uk

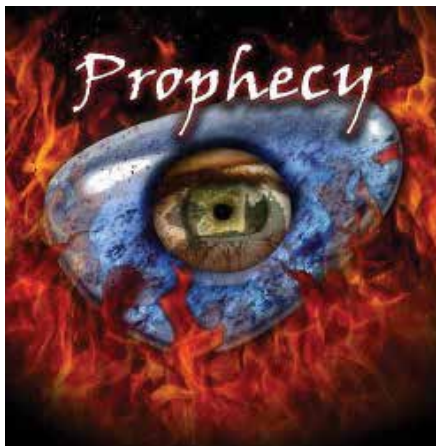
DISTRICT 11
Stewart Cameron
01387 264005
stewart.cameron@noda.org.uk

NODA Scotland Online

NODA Scotland Web Manager Stuart Dick will be delighted to receive contributions to the NODA Scotland section of the website. Here you will find all sorts of useful information, including news and show listings, which can be submitted as far in advance as you have made plans.

Don't forget we also have a very active Facebook page, so please spread the word about this to your members.

Items for inclusion on either the website or Facebook page should be emailed to stuart.dick@noda.org.uk. ★



Prophecy: A New Scottish Musical

In September, MST Productions staged the world premiere of new Scottish musical *Prophecy*, created with an exciting mix of songs, dance styles and lighting effects.

Prophecy dramatises the life and some of the predictions of the Brahan Seer, a figure of Highland legend, who with the aid of a talismanic stone gifted to him from the otherworld, earned a reputation for prophesying the future with uncanny accuracy.

Living in the seventeenth century, he was able to foresee the Battle of Culloden, the Highland Clearances, the demise of the powerful House of Seaforth, the coming of roads, railways and canals into the glens and further, the Second World War, North Sea Oil and the restoration of the Scottish Parliament.

The work contains supernatural chills, romance, comedy, time travel, betrayal and revenge, all communicated through a feast of action, suspense, memorable music and song.

Prophecy was directed by Alan Borthwick, with musical direction and arrangements by Simon Hanson, James McCutcheon and Linda Stewart, with choreography by Paige Orme. ★

Congratulations to The Blairgowrie Players, who were delighted to be one of only seven Scottish companies to be invited to take part in the RSC Open Stages scheme this year with their show *Dream On, Macbeth*.

Local enterprise makes good

Two highly experienced Glasgow stage and prop managers have turned their expertise into entrepreneurship by forming Prop Hire Scotland Ltd, and in a very short time have become a much sought after business partner to many Scottish companies. Here is their story.

Eleanor Wilkins

I started working backstage on shows as a school pupil and returned for many years as a former pupil, sourcing and constructing props under the constraints of a school budget. As a result of this involvement with school shows, I was approached to join Glasgow Light Opera Club's stage-crew and some 20 odd years later I assumed the role of props mistress for the Club.

Given that sourcing props can be a thankless task, it's hardly surprising that word got around that there was someone mad enough to undertake this task! Over the last couple of decades I've been props manager and assistant stage manager (with responsibility for props) for various amateur companies, including The Lyric Club, Theatre Guild, The Minerva Club, The Apollo Players and Pantheon.

I'm very aware, given my personal involvement with amateur dramatics, of the difficulties of sourcing props under financial constraints, and believe this personal experience has helped Prop Hire Scotland become a practical solution for those seeking props.

Tess Byrne

My interest in the theatre was kindled at an early age through my parents' involvement in Nakuru Players, a thriving amateur club in Kenya's Rift Valley. After the usual appearances in school shows and concerts I volunteered at Brighton's Nightingale Theatre and a spell in London's fringe followed.

After a year at the Unicorn Theatre for Children, I spent the next five years working in stage management for various companies in the UK, in venues as diverse as Wortwell Village Hall and the Royal Albert Hall. At this point, I saw the light – literally – and moved away from darkened theatres into project management for the public and private sectors. After moving to Scotland in 2006, I became involved in theatre again, and am currently 'in the corner' for various amateur companies, cueing shows and generally telling people what to do!

Prop Hire Scotland is a new venture, but one that draws on strengths and experiences gathered over both my professional and amateur career. ★

Time for a change

Our society has been in existence for one hundred and eight years. Having been traditionally used to performing Gilbert & Sullivan and French comic opera in the earlier decades, we progressed to performing Viennese operetta in the 1950s and 1960s and the classic musicals were then performed from the 1970s, interspersed with the odd G&S and operetta. After performing in the local Albert Halls for many decades, in 1970 we moved to the Macrobert Theatre, situated in the grounds of Stirling University, and have enjoyed performing in this beautiful purpose built theatre ever since.

In recent times, like many societies around the country, putting on our annual show has become ever more challenging due to ever increasing costs and high royalties. Earlier this year we were faced with the question of how the society would continue in the present climate, with the many professional touring productions limiting our show choices. *Annie* was selected as the choice for our March 2015 show, but this became unavailable to us due to a

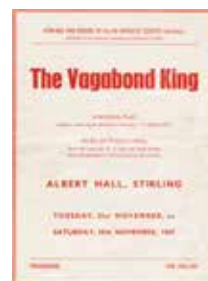
professional tour in 2015.

Having still held on to our theatre date for March, we had the opportunity then to look at a lesser known show and one that is not so regularly produced. We picked *The Drowsy Chaperone*, which has been performed only a handful of times in Scotland. With a more marketable and modern title for our company, we hope this will encourage new members and a broader audience base. If companies are going to survive, it is necessary to recognize, as in the world of business and commerce, that there comes a time for change and the opportunity to re-brand our product. Have we made the right decision? Only time will tell.

Our show dates are 18th to 21st March 2015 (*The Drowsy Chaperone*) and 27th to 31st October 2015 (*White Christmas*). ★

Ken Christie

SABOS Musical Theatre Company



SABOS Musical Theatre Programme from 1967



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South East

South East Committee

Councillor
Kay Rowan
01420 83076
kay.rowan@noda.org.uk

Regional Secretary
Priscilla Blanchard
01892 669719
priscilla.titford@noda.org.uk

Regional Treasurer
Keith Smithers
01903 202 000
keith.smithers@noda.org.uk

Membership Secretary
Marie Coltman
01202 581385
marie.coltman@noda.org.uk

Web Manager
Stuart Ardern
023 8029 3120
stuart.ardern@noda.org.uk

Awards Secretary
Margaret Coltman
01202 658380
margaret.coltman@noda.org.uk

Magazine/News Editor
Gregory Gower
01323 737813
gregory.gower@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor (East)
Amelia Regnante
07840 882944
amelia.regnante@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor (West)
John E. Thomas
023 9225 6443
john.thomas@noda.org.uk

Drama Advisor
Margaret Fields
01962 775 438
margaret.fields@noda.org.uk

Councillor's Comments

It is a great honour when your Regional Councillor is elected to be President of NODA. Little did I think when John Barnes became Vice-President that I would be stepping into his shoes and have the privilege to be elected by the South East as their Councillor. I was still a relatively new regional rep and previously worked alongside many reps with a great deal more experience, so I approach my new role with trepidation.

I am very enthusiastic about theatre in our communities and hope to assist in the development of NODA's influence in the South East. My husband Roger and I are looking forward to visiting parts of the region we have hitherto only heard of. Even more, we are excited to meet all those who are performing, painting, lighting and all those other myriad of jobs which are essential to the hundreds of productions taking place each year.

I am due to get involved in a volunteering initiative called Volunteering in the Arts, which is a project in conjunction with Up for Arts and BBC Radio. Hopefully we will find some volunteers to assist with the running of societies and expanding the promotional skills of societies. So watch this space for ideas in the future.

Following a very successful AGM this year at



Eastbourne I am looking for ideas for 2015. Suggestions would be welcome, particularly ideas for workshops or speakers. I am keen we should develop our skills in the South East. We have such a wealth of talent it would be great if we had volunteers to lead workshops. Could you offer a session?

Kay Rowan
Councillor, NODA South East

Outgoing Councillor's Thanks

I want to thank all our members for the support you have given me in the time I have been your Regional Councillor, and it has been a great pleasure to meet many of you when attending productions or other events.

The year ahead is going to be a busy one as President of NODA, but I am sure it will be a most enjoyable time meeting many more members from across the country. Thank you to all those who came to the National AGM and Presidential Gala at the Felbridge Hotel and Spa. I hope that you found it both enjoyable and an opportunity to meet with likeminded others.



I look forward to being at your regional conference next year and renewing acquaintances. My very best wishes to you all.

John W. Barnes
NODA President

South East Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1
Phillip Hall
01273 473500
phillip.hall@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2
Brenda Gower
01323 737813
brenda.gower@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 3
Anne Lawson
01424 428693
anne.lawson@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 5
Gordon Harris
01634 402323
gordon.harris@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 6
Ben Clark
07718 087438
ben.clark@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 7
Doreen Grierson
01474 813611
doreen.grierson@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 8
Lance Milton
07803 896871
lance.milton@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 9
Jose Harrison
01903 892248
jose.harrison@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 10
John E. Thomas
023 9225 6443
john.thomas@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 11
Barbara Fairclough
01489 690140
barbara.fairclough@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 12
Gloria Smith
01932 866323
gloria.smith@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 13
Marie Coltman
01202 581385
marie.coltman@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 14
Chris Horton
01256 882 426
chris.horton@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 15
Vacant
Please contact
Regional Councillor

DISTRICT 16
Rita Boffin
01983 731491
rita.boffin@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 17
Stuart Ardern
023 8029 3120
stuart.ardern@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 18
Betty Haslam
01420 83532
betty.haslam@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 19
Jon Fox
020 8668 6768
jon.fox@noda.org.uk



Mad Margaret's Minstrels is a new company in NODA South East that is looking for singers and actors to take part in the premiere of this new light operatic production.

As a long-time member of operatic societies and a lover of Gilbert and Sullivan, I have watched with great sadness the gradual demise of the wonderful tradition that is G&S. Now I hope I may be able to offer a show to tantalise performers and audiences back.

It almost goes without saying that the music is great (and unchanged). *Buxton Or Bust* is packed with chorus work and offers the chance to create new, fun and interesting characters. *Buxton Or Bust* has been created to be cheap to produce and is set backstage in a modern day theatre, with *Pirates of Penzance* as the off-stage performance. Most societies will have the props, set and costumes in stock.

Now how much to tell you without launching a spoiler and giving away the plot, which

in true Gilbertian style is fun, involved and slightly ridiculous? The audience will have to suspend their belief whilst you, dear performer, will use all your skills to enable them to believe in every word.

The question is can Lord Simon get the company to the Gilbert and Sullivan Festival?

Or will a health and safety officer, a property developer and a chorus of unruly ghosts stop him? ★

For more information go to www.buxtonorbust.co.uk

Celebrating 79 years of service

Three women from Little Common and Bexhill Players are celebrating 79 years of service to their society and to entertaining the area.

Jacqueline Young made her debut in 2000 by taking the title role in *Sleeping Beauty* and has appeared in other pantomimes and murder mysteries, and she has also directed for the company. At present she is serving as wardrobe mistress and joint poster designer. Jacqueline considers the LCB Players as her extended family.

Lyn Ford has been involved with LCB Players for 23 years and is currently secretary of the society. She has played principal roles in



plays, murder mysteries, revues and pantomimes. Lyn has devised and directed two revues and one play, and she will be directing the society's 2015 production of *Puss in Boots*.

Elisabeth Doust first joined the Uxbridge and District Choral and Dramatic Society in 1972, and later Walton and Weybridge AOS, clocking up 50 shows. In 2004 she joined LCB Players, adding 28 shows to her running total. Elisabeth has directed for

the society and written both a murder mystery and a full length play, as well as being the current Chairman. To date her service has totalled 42 years, involving some 83 shows. ★

Well done ladies!



regionalroundup

South West

South West Committee

Councillor
Nick Lawrence
01404 758463
nick.lawrence@noda.org.uk

Regional Secretary &
Pantomime Liaison

Iain Douglas
01803 290371
iain.douglas@noda.org.uk

Regional Treasurer
Adrian Vanstone
01395 272 803
adrian.vanstone@noda.org.uk

Membership Secretary
Graeme Savage
01179 866 516
graeme.savage@noda.org.uk

Web Manager
Stuart Lyddon
07827 317 532
stuart.lyddon@noda.org.uk

Awards Secretary
Frankie Telford
01453 842 695
frankie.telford@noda.org.uk

Regional Editor
Matthew Heaton
01249 713 743
matthew.heaton@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor & Conference
Administrator
Lynne Caygill
01395 272 577
lynne.caygill@noda.org.uk

Youth Representative
Phil Barnett
01736 796 171
phil.barnett@noda.org.uk

South West Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1
TJ Richards
07840 109182
thomas.richards@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2
Kathy West
01637 880622
kathy.west@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 3
Michael Simpson
01752 330 159
michael.simpson@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 4
Iain Douglas
01803 290371
iain.douglas@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 5
Graham Liverton
07855 562 621
graham.liverton@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 6
Janet Elworthy
01823 680 117
janet.elworthy@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 7
Ian Goodenough
07967 217 685
ian.goodenough@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 8
Trudy Dyke
01935 428 382
trudy.dyke@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 8A
Jo Wilson-Hunt
01823 663 257
jo.wilson-hunt@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 9
Sue Pomeroy
01278 662 181
sue.pomeroy@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 10
Petra Schofield
07966 552 853
petra.schofield@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 11
Vacant
Please contact
Nick Lawrence

DISTRICT 12
Brian Oliver
01202 424 645
brian.oliver@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 13
Tony Winstone
01179 442 044
tony.winstone@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 14
Graeme Savage
01179 866 516
graeme.savage@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 15
Frankie Telford
01453 842 695
frankie.telford@noda.org.uk



Chris Harris Remembered

Chris (on left). Courtesy
of Sue Pomeroy

Sue Pomeroy reports on the life and times of the South West's well-loved actor and famed pantomime dame, after his untimely passing.

Chris Harris passed away in April 2014 at the age of 71, following a battle with cancer. Chris, who lived in Portishead near Bristol with his second wife Vicky, leaves two sons from a previous marriage. He was a prolific actor, writer and director who taught and performed throughout the world from Bristol to Beijing, Salisbury to Singapore.

Chris Harris was born in Bridgwater, Somerset, and at an early age showed his artistic and comedic promise when he joined Bridgwater Amateur Operatic Society. Following a production of *The Student Prince* in 1961 he left the town to study drama at the Rose Bruford College and spent two years working with the Bristol Old Vic Theatre Company. He attended the Jacques Lecoq's L'École Internationale de Théâtre in Paris, Ladislav Fialka's Pantomime Company in Prague, and was for a short time at the Moscow State Circus School.

From 1976 until his death, Chris performed his one-man comedy shows around the world and presented his *Kemps Jig* to the delight of the Queen and her family at Windsor Castle. However, in the South West, Chris was best known for his festive pantomimes and his

fabulous portrayal of the pantomime dame. Nothing short of a phenomenon, Chris had an extraordinary rapport with his audience and had delighted pantomime audiences at Bristol Old Vic and Theatre Royal Bath for almost 30 years. As well as performing, he wrote pantomime scripts which are performed by professional and amateur companies all over the world each year.

Chris retained his links to Bridgwater through his family and his lifetime friendship with Brian Buttle, also from Bridgwater. Many NODA members will remember Brian from his contribution as a tutor in stage management at NODA Summer School, until his untimely death in 2010.

Chris Harris was an extraordinary man. He was always professional, incredibly generous, a wonderful mentor, a talented and extremely funny performer and a loyal friend. The Farewell Jollification held in his memory took place in the Theatre Royal Bath's Main House on 20th May and was a bright, happy and colourful event - like his entire life. Friends and family were able to pay tribute through songs, sketches, dancing and celebration.

He will be missed by so many and remembered always. ★

Sue Pomeroy
Regional Representative, District 9

War productions promote spirit of collaboration

Matt Heaton reports on how 'Oh, What A Lovely War' is encouraging local groups to work together like never before.

The opportunity to perform this moving First World War show in the centenary year of the start of hostilities has seen more local groups working together on joint productions than ever before. Drama groups seem to feel they cannot do the music justice alone, while musical groups seem to feel the same about performing a serious play. Working together addresses this perfectly, as well as sharing the potential risks.

Trowbridge Players and TAOS Musical Theatre completed their collaborative performances across two weeks, from 16th to 25th October, at the Arc Theatre. Lyme Regis Dramatic Society also teamed up with Lyme Youth Theatre and 3QB to put on a production in November in support of the Marine Theatre and to mark the centenary. 3QB are an ad hoc group formed specifically to raise funds for the theatre, having raised more than £10,000 since their formation in 2006. Their production opened on Armistice Day and ran until 15th November. ★

Investing in the future

Over 100 young performers aged 10 to 16 years old have attended NODA South West's recent youth musical theatre days at the Octagon Theatre, Yeovil. Led by industry professionals Kat Stevens, Claire Kahane and Paul Harwood, recent workshops have covered to date *Wicked*, *Matilda* and most recently *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, all of which are currently running in the West End.

The workshops are non-stop learning, with the performers going through three musical numbers, dance routines and drama. From raw beginners to seasoned performers, everyone who attended was buzzing with energy and had great fun learning and being completely focused.

At the end of the day an audience of parents, grandparents, friends and NODA South West's Councillor Nick Lawrence were treated to a mini presentation of what they had been working on. Afterwards, Nick congratulated the workshop company and tutors on their day's work. He was impressed with what he had seen and felt that NODA's contribution to the costs was money well spent. Watch this space for future workshop details. ★

Trudy Dyke



Century up for the Cotswold Savoyards

Having marked their fiftieth anniversary in 2012, Cheltenham-based Cotswold Savoyards recently staged their 100th show and returned to their roots with a very successful production of *The Mikado*.

For this production, directed by Margaret Craven, the first act was played in modern dress and set in the factory of the Titipu motor company, while the second act reverted to traditional Japanese costumes and garden setting.

Originally founded to stage the works of Gilbert & Sullivan, the society now alternates between G&S and other pieces of musical theatre. The group are performing the Gershwin musical comedy *Strike Up The Band* this November. As this show was the Gershwins' attempt to create an American version of G&S, this is hopefully an ideal start to the Savoyards' second century of productions! ★

Frankie Telford

Dear Mother

New production by Tisbury man gives something new to the World War One story.

It can be a tricky business finding a powerful monologue that stretches an actor's emotional range and that hasn't already been done to death. Readers will be delighted to hear that there's a new eight time award-winning play that has just been published as a paperback script by Magic Oxygen, and which has the ability to leave audiences weeping in the aisles.

Mark James, actor, playwright and theatre director from Tisbury, Wiltshire, penned *Dear Mother*, a one act, four scene play that tells the tale of a young man's journey into adulthood and to the frontline, via letters to his mother. During a period that has seen many writers mark this important anniversary, *Dear Mother* has managed to stand out with rave reviews. It even managed to catch the eye of David Childs CBE, founder of the National Memorial Arboretum, who said: "Mark takes the audience directly into the mind and experiences of a young man trying to tell his family what he's enduring. At a time when we're trying to understand, as well as recall the horrors of the Great War, one could do little better than to read or see *Dear Mother*."

With its small cast and easily re-creatable set, Mark has also had remarkable success touring schools and running drama workshops. He concludes: "I'm delighted that *Dear Mother* continues to leave such an impression on audiences of all ages and I hope it leaves an abiding message that the pain of war lingers forever. Peace is something we should all strive for."

Visit MarkJamesPlays.co.uk or MagicOxygen.co.uk to get in touch, to order a copy (£4.99) or to apply for a performance licence. Reductions are available for educational establishments. ★



Courtesy of Tracey West, Magic Oxygen



regionalroundup Wales & Ireland

Wales & Ireland Committee

Councillor
Brian Sullivan
01792 202376
brian.sullivan@noda.org.uk

Regional Secretary
Jackie Titley 01686 650955
jackie.titley@noda.org.uk

Regional Treasurer &
Membership Secretary
Ian Hogg 01686 650955
ian.hogg@noda.org.uk

Magazine Editor
Dee McIlroy 01873 855311
dee.mcilroy@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor
Zoe Richards 07816 149856
zoe.richards@noda.org.uk

Web Manager
Guy Wooles 02920 710818
guy.wooles@noda.org.uk

Awards Secretary
Lyn Emmerson
01492 870205
lyn.emmerson@noda.org.uk

Wales & Ireland Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1
Lyn Emmerson 01492 870205
lyn.emmerson@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 1A
Jackie Titley 01686 650955
jackie.titley@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2
Sheelagh Hobart
02891 852760
sheelagh.hobart@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 3
Dee McIlroy 01873 855311
dee.mcilroy@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 4
Ralph Thomas 07787 005810
ralph.thomas@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 5
Luke Spencer 01554 229904
luke.spencer@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 6
Brian Slate 01267 242965
brian.slate@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 7
Sharon Davies
01633 764939
sharon.davies@noda.org.uk



Youth workshop held at Blaenau
Gwent Young Stars' rehearsal venue

Councillor's Comments

We are now well and truly into the busiest period of the year for most societies, not only for the presentation of musicals but also for pantomimes, which is a great opportunity for money to be made to prop up those activities which lose money during the year. In the present financial climate most societies have a need to prop up their financial returns and there is a need to encourage new ideas. These can come from the younger members of your society who need to be encouraged to become involved. Don't be afraid to let them have a go - you might be pleasantly surprised. They may be more in touch with the outside world than you are! Pat them on the back and give them every encouragement; they could be the answer to the future of your group.

We recently held a highly successful workshop for young people at Ebbw Vale and we are keen to hold similar workshops for both adults and young people in other districts. If you are

interested in a workshop please contact your regional representative and we will look at the possibility of visiting your district.

Remember to invite your regional representative to your next show and you will be considered for the district awards, and if you invite me along then you will be considered for the regional awards. Last year I saw 40 productions, and this year so far I have seen 32 productions and the invitations are still coming in! I am seeing many different societies this year which is wonderful, and I have been truly amazed by what they have achieved. Keep up the good work.

Wishing you all a successful season. ★

Pob hwyl,

Brian Sullivan
Councillor, NODA Wales and Ireland



NODA Wales and Ireland Awards Success

Congratulations to all our regional and district award winners and nominees 2013.

The NODA awards were presented at the Gala Awards Dinner, Three Counties Hotel, Saturday 17th May 2014. They were attended by 2013/2014 President Robert Lumsden and his wife Anne.

Regional Award Winners 2013

Best Youth Production
Miss Saigon, Carmarthen
Youth Opera (District 6)

Best Supporting Performance
Non Lewis with Opera Teifi
(District 6), playing Ado
Annie in Oklahoma!

Best Individual Performance
Neil Parker with Maesteg AOS
(District 5), playing Jekyll and
Hyde in Jekyll and Hyde

Best Production
Jekyll and Hyde, Maesteg
AOS (District 5)

Good luck for the NODA awards 2014, which will be presented at the Gala Awards Dinner in 2015.



Edna is full of 'Glee'



When Edna Howard took on the onerous role of Chairperson of Newcastle Glees Musical Society in Northern Ireland 20 years ago, she never for a moment thought what would happen later down the line.

For all her hard work for the society has been rewarded with her inclusion in Her Majesty the Queen's Honours List, in which she was awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) for her contribution to music and the arts, and for her work in the community.

Edna's family have had a long connection with The Glees. Her father, Ernie

McCready, was one of the founding members of the company. Edna has been involved with The Glees from a very young age, and as Chair was the mover and shaker in purchasing the Annesley Hall in Newcastle and turning it into the delightful theatre it is today.

As well as the whole community of Newcastle, we in the Wales and Ireland region are proud that she has been recognised for all the work she has undertaken. Commenting on her award, Edna said she was "humbled to be the recipient of a BEM" and that it was "a complete and very pleasant surprise." She was also quick to state that "this honour that has been bestowed on me is also for all the members of the Glee Singers."

Newcastle Glees' Honorary Secretary Aline Hanna commended Edna for her award, stating that "no better or more deserving person" could have been presented with it, and praised Edna's "guidance and determination" in getting the funds together to buy and refurbish Annesley Hall to its original state.

Congratulations from the Wales and Ireland region. ★

Where are they now?

Sian Harrington, formerly a member of Abergavenny Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society, has recently been treading the boards in Canberra, Australia.

As well as previously being part of a NODA member society, Sian is a graduate of the Musical Theatre and Drama programme at the Cumbria Institute of the Arts, and has undertaken a variety of roles in the UK, such as Joanna in *Sweeney Todd*, Sarah in *Guys and Dolls*



and Yum Yum in *The Mikado*.

She has also sung in many classical concerts with Crickhowell Choral Society, including Mozart's *Requiem* and Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*.

Since being in Canberra she has performed with Canberra Repertory Society in *Back to the 80s* and *West Side Story*, and was nominated as a best ensemble cast

What an honour



After almost thirty years, Phoenix Players has been recognised with an MBE award. The award was made to Dennis

McKeever in the Queen's New Year Honours List 2013 for service to the community of Northern Ireland through music and drama.

With an impressive CV, which cites working with numerous local (and not so local) theatre groups, the MBE is thoroughly deserved, and Dennis is naturally delighted. "I'm just a front man – the visible one in the orchestra pit for the Junior Phoenix," he said. "It's a group award. There's a terrific team and I thank them one and all." But most of all, he thanks the young stars over the years, "without whom the Junior Phoenix Players wouldn't exist."

He is proud that one young star, Ryan Gibb, has gone on to play Caiaphas in the UK tour of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, starring former Spice Girl Melanie C and Chris Moyles. Another ex-Junior Phoenix, Aaron McCusker, is blazing a trail in the TV smash hit *Shameless*, as well as hit US TV show *Dexter*.

But Dennis is especially proud of the fact that over the years Phoenix has afforded hundreds of young people the thrill of appearing on stage, learning new life skills and "simply having a marvellous time." ★

member in *Under Milk Wood* in the Canberra Area Theatre Awards.

Earlier this year, Sian was lucky enough to perform in *Forbidden Broadway* with Canberra's Free-Rain Theatre Company. The production, directed by Anne Somes, is an off-Broadway revue which made its debut in 1982 and has since been performed globally. It is an entertaining tribute to some of theatre's greatest shows, including *CATS*, *Mamma Mia!*, *Wicked* and *Annie*.

The entire Wales and Ireland region is very proud of Sian's success in Australia and hope that she continues to enjoy her time in the theatre there. ★



regionalroundup

West Midlands

West Midlands Committee

Councillor
Michael Hastilow
07968 355101
michael.hastilow@noda.org.uk

Regional Secretary and
Regional Treasurer
Wendy Winterburn
01432 273907
wendy.winterburn@noda.org.uk

Membership Secretary
Jean Beard
01902 882362
jean.beard@noda.org.uk

Web Manager
Vacant, please contact
Regional Councillor

Awards Secretary
Wyn Mason
01782 616486
wyn.mason@noda.org.uk

Regional Editor
Vacant, please contact
Regional Councillor

Youth Advisor
Steve Groves
07971 625865
steve.groves@noda.org.uk

West Midlands Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1
Louise Hickey MBE
01531 635133
louise.hickey@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2
Kay Ikin
01948 880200
kay.ikin@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 3
Rachel Millar
01785 602830
rachel.millar@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 4
Annette Nuttall
01676 532225
annette.nuttall@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 5
Judi Walton
07986 938903
judi.walton@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 6
Joyce Eyre
0121 744 3335
joyce.eyre@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 7
Alf Rai
07739 920233
alfred.rai@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 8
Dennis Price
01384 571737
dennis.price@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 9
Paul Douglass
07876 190519
paul.douglass@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 10
Trevor Guest
01299 402690
trevor.guest@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 11
Brian Hirst
01543 677144
brian.hirst@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 12
Ian Cox
01527 543808
ian.cox@noda.org.uk

Councillor's Comments

They say that if you want a job doing, give it to someone who is already busy, they will somehow find a way of doing it. This is true in our chosen hobby, as a number of our region's articles in this edition underline.

Within the region the experience at Kidderminster Operatic and Dramatic Society also bears this out, as last year their patron Edna Church died aged 96. In addition to her membership of the society since 1939, including key committee roles, she had been active within the local Soroptimists, been Mayoress twice, spent 30 years as a magistrate, drove for meals on wheels, organised several mother and baby groups within the town and still found time to be a popular patron. Her successor Pat Scully seems equally busy, having been a member for 50 years on stage and having held various committee roles, including those of secretary and chairman, as well as directing and acting as seamstress. We wish her well and it seems that the mould has not been broken.

Elsewhere in the region there is lots of evidence of service to societies and this manifests itself in the number of NODA long service awards being presented, in

addition to societies finding their own way of acknowledging service, often in the name of past members who in their day gave sterling service. For example, Shrewsbury members have been very busy, with three members receiving awards totalling 125 years of combined service. The same society makes awards for services backstage in addition to those for performance. When making awards it is important to value the role of those who labour behind the scenes, in administration, backstage and front of house.

Michael Hastilow
Councillor, NODA West Midlands



Fiona Hankin, Marian Hoskin and Anne Nichol (Shrewsbury AOS)

Rave reviews for Side by Side

Congratulations to Side by Side Theatre Company of Stourbridge for their Edinburgh production of *Illyria-on-Sea*, which has won them a plethora of rave reviews. The show is based on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* but is set in a 1950s seaside resort.

Edinburgh Guide were full of praise for the production: "Side by Side describe themselves as a company of learning-disabled actors, but their considerable abilities take them through this fast moving show with barely a pause and with real distinction." (www.edinburghguide.com)

In a similar vein, Broadway

Baby praised the group for its "refreshing and enchanting interpretation" and described the adaptation as "spectacularly original, yet... true to its source throughout." (www.broadwaybaby.com)

Well done to everyone at Side by Side, you can all be very proud of yourselves! ★

The Presidential Chain: A Vital Society Link

When Alan Leadbeater became Chairman of Redditch Operatic Society (ROS) in 1981, the society already knew that they had found a hugely dynamic and charismatic leader. It was no surprise, therefore, that in 1999 Alan was appointed President of the society, a post he held until his death last year in 2013. Both as Chairman and in his 15

years as President, Alan had inspired and driven ROS in every way possible, helping the society achieve on stage success and innovation behind the scenes, and overseeing the fundraising of in excess of £29,000 for local charities.

Since being reformed in 1959, like every society, ROS has seen members young and old come and go. Some move on to



Alan Leadbeater

other interests and some pass away, but a small handful of stalwarts remain who were there at the very beginning. In searching for a successor to Alan, ROS looked to one of those founding members and Robert Taylor was chosen as their new President. It was felt that Bob would be a worthy and admirable

successor to Alan.

The role of President can often be seen as a symbolic position with very few actual duties. That said, individuals like Alan and Bob (who remains an active on stage performing member) bring such drive and enthusiasm

to a company that the President has to be seen as more than just a member of 'the chain gang', greeting visitors at the door.

Current society Chairman Tony Jay said: "The best committees combine the technical skills and media savvy of the younger generation with the experience of people, like Alan and Bob, who have been there over many years through the good and the bad. They can offer wise

insight and council to the committee based on years of familiarity and understanding. Any society who can call upon people such as Alan and Bob to serve them in this role are very lucky indeed." ★

Ian G Cox
Regional Representative,
District 12



Bob Taylor



One of our biggest headaches which probably takes up the most time in our committee meetings (and I would suggest this applies to all societies) is to find the right show, the one that will capture the imagination, excitement and attention of the cast and entertain our audiences.

Finding a show to satisfy 80 members for 25 weekly rehearsals can be a real challenge. We perform two shows a year, normally a pantomime in January and a July production. We have performed a whole range of 'off the peg' shows, from *We Will Rock You* to *West Side Story*, and we've won awards for these shows, but there are only so many that fit the bill.

The answer, we have found, is to write our own shows, and we have certainly honed our skills over the years. I suppose the term 'juke box' musical fits what we do, weaving a story around a wide range of music, from the charts to golden oldies to show tunes. A perk is that dealing with PRS has been a painless and much cheaper alternative to paying royalties. So give it a go! What have you got to lose? ★

Steve Groves
Youth Advisor, NODA West Midlands

Made to measure or off the peg?

Let's do a show, let's do it here, let's do it now. If only it were that simple none of us would have any problems. We are all well aware of the problems of using young people in theatre, dealing with local authorities and licensing issues, but these are all surmountable obstacles.

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