

# TnodaDAY★

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*Professional support for amateur theatre*

Members commemorate  
the First World War

**NODA Insurance  
and NODASafe provide  
tips for war productions**

Articles from Utopia  
Costumes and  
The Border Studio

four page  
**AGM**  
spread and  
booking form  
**inside**

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06/14



**Welcome to the third edition of NODA TODAY. In this edition you will find our four page AGM spread, with all the information you need about the venue, the itinerary and the packages on offer, as well as the booking form to secure your place and welcome South East Councillor John Barnes as the incoming NODA National President.**

The National AGM and Presidential Gala will be held at The Felbridge Hotel & Spa in East Grinstead from 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> September 2014, with the AGM and Presidential Inauguration taking place on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup>. To ensure that resolutions are heard, particulars of all formal resolutions should be sent to me by Friday 15<sup>th</sup> August. And if you'd like any particular points raising at the AGM or open forum, please do get in touch with me by the same date.

You'll find the AGM information across pages 17 to 20 of the magazine, and as this is the middle spread you can easily pull out these pages for your own reference, and fill in and send back your booking form. Bookings need to be received by Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> August and should be sent to South East Representative Bob Cousins, whose details are included on the form. You'll also find the booking form online on the NODA website ([www.noda.org.uk](http://www.noda.org.uk)).

In this edition we are also commemorating the centenary of the First World War. We know that a great number of NODA societies are recognising the event through their shows, and pass on best wishes to all of those who are putting on commemorative shows this year. You'll find an interesting article on just a few of our societies who have performed shows in memory of the Great War on page five, and also a very informative piece on pages 32 to 33 from NODA Insurance and NODASafe on how to safely and legally perform war scenes with firearms, pyrotechnics and smoke effects.

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

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# did you noda?

NODA is now licensing *The Reunion*, a new musical written by members of NODA society Waveney Light Opera Group. The musical, which is aimed at amateurs and won the prestigious NODA President's Cup in 2013, follows the lives of two pupils of Grangebourne Secondary Modern as their lives diverge and a school reunion 23 years later brings them back together. Go to [www.thereunionmusical.co.uk](http://www.thereunionmusical.co.uk) or visit [www.noda.org.uk/scripts/the\\_reunion](http://www.noda.org.uk/scripts/the_reunion) for licensing information. Alternatively call **01733 374 790** or email [info@noda.org.uk](mailto:info@noda.org.uk).

You can sign up for NODA's email newsletter NODA Updates at [www.nodaupdates.co.uk](http://www.nodaupdates.co.uk). When you sign up you get loads of free goodies to download and use at home or in your society, like our social media guides and our handy calendar sheets. You also get NODA Updates in your inbox every month, a great newsletter for anyone interested in amateur theatre and NODA news and events.



**noda**  
SAFE

NODASafe has recently launched a new online first aid course. Run in conjunction with Emergency Medical Training, the Appointed Person for Management of First Aid course ensures that society members have



the know-how to deal with emergency situations when they arise and wherever they arise. This is a great option for societies that provides the flexibility of learning at home and taking the test online, but that doesn't hit the finances and offers up to date information. Go to [www.emergencymedicaltraining.com/noda](http://www.emergencymedicaltraining.com/noda) to sign up.

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# Obituaries

**Sadly, this year two past NODA Presidents have passed away. Reg Vinnicombe, NODA President from 2001 – 2002, died on 1<sup>st</sup> February following a period of illness after Christmas, and John Richards, NODA President from 1999 – 2000, died in the early hours of 20<sup>th</sup> March. We remember both John and Reg fondly and our condolences are extended to their families.**



## John Richards

John served NODA for many years, initially as a Regional Representative and then as Councillor for NODA West Midlands. He was President in NODA's centenary year, when he and his wife Iris were superb ambassadors for the Association.

Following his presidential year he served as Chairman of NODA Ltd and Chairman of the Management Committee. Although he bowed out of NODA nationally in September 2008, he continued to support the Association for many years, and he and Iris were regular attendees at the AGM and Presidential Gala until ill health prevented John from travelling too far. He also continued to attend the NODA West Midlands Regional Committee as 'father of the house', where his wise counsel and experience were always respected.

## A Personal Memory of John Richards

**From Bert Lumsden, NODA President 2013 – 2014**

"One of my mentors when I became Regional Representative, Councillor and then President was John Richards, or 'JR' as he was affectionately called. John could easily have been called 'the man from NODA', for he earned the respect of everyone by his dedication to the duties allotted to him and his natural friendliness.

Despite his illness in recent years he always enquired about NODA and I know that until recently he was still active in his West Midlands region. John was proud of his family and their achievements, and our heartfelt condolences go out to his dear wife Iris, his daughters Lesley and Gill, and their families.

John's legacy to NODA is the John Richards Training Fund, but for those who knew him 'JR' will always be 'JR'."



## Reg Vinnicombe

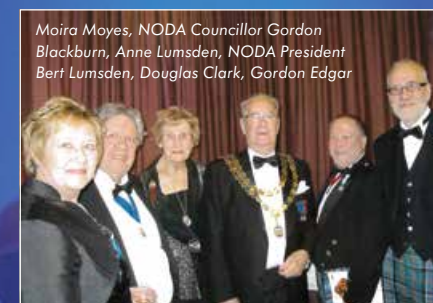
Reg first became involved in amateur theatre in 1959 when he joined Guiseley AOS. He was elected to NODA as a Regional Representative for what is now NODA North East District 11 in 1983, before being elected as Councillor in 1991. Under his management as Councillor, NODA North East thrived. Reg was particularly proud of the success of the North East Gala Weekend in Bridlington, which grew from an attendance of some 350 when he became Councillor to over 1,000 delegates. At the National AGM in 2001 he was installed as President of the Association, in his beloved Bridlington with over 600 delegates in attendance; it was the largest national weekend ever.

Reg was always a keen financial manager and for several years he was a respected member of what is now known as the Management Committee. He also acted as Treasurer for NODA Summer School. Reg was a popular President and he continued to serve on Council as an elected life member until 2008, but he continued to support NODA for many years, and the North East region in particular.

Former NODA National News Editor John Slim passed away aged 83 in April of this year. He leaves behind his wife Elsa, three daughters and a son, and nine grandchildren. John was a professional journalist and theatre critic, as well as a poet and writer of limericks, and edited the NODA magazine for many years. He also wrote many thought provoking articles before NODA National News ceased to be published in 2009. John's long-time friend and colleague Roger Clarke has written a tribute to John, which can be found at [www.behindtheearras.com](http://www.behindtheearras.com). ★

# World War One Commemorations (1914 – 2014)

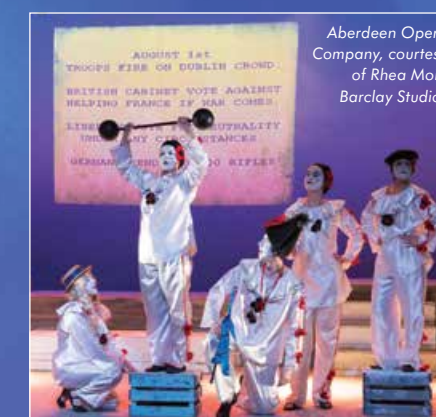
**The year 2014 marks one hundred years since the outset of the First World War, a momentous anniversary that is being commemorated up and down the country by NODA societies. Here's a snapshot of some of the commemorative shows being put on by our members.**



Back in November 2013, Aberdeen Opera Company launched their production of *Oh What A Lovely War*, in association with the Gordon Highlanders Museum. On opening night in March 2014 the society hosted a regimental gala led by the Lord Provost of Aberdeen City, which was opened by Sir Peter Graham OBE of the Gordon Highlanders Museum. NODA President Bert Lumsden, who had the honour of attending the event, said that Sir Graham's opening speech was "a very moving tribute to those who fought in the First World War." Indeed, the Gordon Highlanders have a strong connection to the Great War, with 50,000 of their men serving throughout

the four years. Of these, nearly 30,000 were either killed or injured in battle. The Highlanders were present at every major battle on the Western Front and were in action until the very last day of the war.

Wilma Gillander MBE, director of the show, explained that "a significant aim of national commemorative events was to involve young people", so Aberdeen Opera Company, in association with the Gordon Highlanders Museum, enacted a schools' outreach programme to help educate youngsters about the Great War. The company went to three secondary schools to provide workshops, which were funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and also provided a schools' performance for over 200 pupils. As Chairman of the company Scott Jamieson reminds us, the schools' outreach programme was important so that "we do not forget the sacrifices made for our freedom all those years ago."



*Oh What A Lovely War* tells the story of the Great War based on the political, economic and tactical factors that fuelled it. It reminds us of the great suffering endured by so many and how the human spirit of the soldiers, along with their comradeship and wit, helped them to transcend the horror of war.

It is no wonder that a great many societies will be performing this show in 2014. In May, NODA society the Mellow Dramatics also performed the show at the Brewhouse Arts Centre in Burton on Trent. They felt that *Oh What A Lovely War* was the right choice to commemorate the First World War because its message is still relevant to audiences today. It draws us in with sentimental songs and then hits us with the reality of war.

Another timeless and moving story set against the backdrop of the Great War is Howard Goodall's *The Hired Man*. NODA company Long Eaton Operatic Society performed this at the end of 2013, an appropriate time to reflect on the devastation of war with the centenary just around the corner. *The Hired Man* is essentially a love story based on the novel by Melvyn Bragg, but its backdrop against the Great War tells the tale of ordinary British families whose sons, husbands and fathers were killed in action, leaving the country's male population decimated. Eleanor Harvey, chorus member and publicity manager of Long Eaton, explains that the music within the production helped to carry the emotion of the story, particularly the song 'Day Follows Day', "which highlights the experience of the women left behind by the war and their attempt to carry on with ordinary everyday life." The emotional songs had an impact on the entire cast, and Eleanor notes that "there were tears coming off stage most nights, and rehearsals were quite a teary affair." Happily, Long Eaton's production of *The Hired Man* has been nominated by NODA for the best musical award in the East Midlands region.

Is your society commemorating the centenary of the Great War? Let us know on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalOperaticDramaticAssociation](http://www.facebook.com/NationalOperaticDramaticAssociation) or tweet us @NODAtweets. We'd love to hear about member commemorations of this event.



Long Eaton Operatic Society



# regionalroundup East

## Record number of nominations for Lowestoft Players

On Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April at the NODA East Gala Awards Day, held at Burgess Hall, Lowestoft Players received a record number of nominations for NODA awards. The group were major winners in four of the five categories in which they were nominated.

Their production of *Oliver!*, directed by Lauren Major, won the Best Musical award, and Lauren's younger brother Thomas Major (aged 11) won joint Best Young Performer with Tom Scoggins (also 11) for their shared role of Oliver in the 2013 production.

Lowestoft Players also won Best Pantomime for *Sleeping Beauty* and Best Technical Achievement for their *Christmas Spectacular* show, which was the first to be held in the Players' newly converted Seaman's Bethel Chapel, which is now a 200 seat theatre. The company also won the region's best programme and poster competition for their production of *Calendar Girls*. Lowestoft Players were congratulated for their consistent high standards of performance and also won the overall Best Production Award for 2013.

Other awards for District 6 were Best Youth Production for B & B Theatre Company for their production of *Peter Pan*, and the Best Play award went to Pulham Players for their production of *No Sex Please We're British*.

**Terry Rymer**  
NODA East Representative, District 6



(L-R) Stephen Wilson, Deanne Dickson, Thomas Major, Terry Rymer, Tom Scoggins, Lauren Major

## Norfolk One Act Playwriting Competition

In 2010 June Owen discovered that, unlike many counties, Norfolk did not have its own playwriting competition, so she decided to arrange what was meant to be a one-off competition. Susan Dupont, NODA Representative for District 5, agreed to join June on the adjudication panel along with NODA member Gloria-Jean Bamber.

The competition was so well received and supported by writers that it is now in its third year. Anyone interested in taking part in this year's competition, which is open to all Norfolk residents aged 18 or over, should email [june.owen1@sky.com](mailto:june.owen1@sky.com) to request a copy of the full rules and conditions of entry. This year's deadline for submissions is 31<sup>st</sup> July.

Winning plays will be performed by Garboldisham Amateur Dramatic Society prior to the presentation of trophies and certificates, along with prize money of £200, £100 and £50 for the first, second and third place playwrights. ★



This year's NODA East AGM charity is Help for Heroes. NODA East Councillor Don McKay's son is serving in Afghanistan and sends a heartfelt 'Thank you NODA East' from his platoon, the Second Battalion Royal Anglians. ★

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# A Weekend of RSC Training for Shakespeare at the George

**Actors and technical teams from Huntingdon-based Shakespeare at the George spent the last weekend in March in Stratford, receiving training in various areas from the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) at The Courtyard Theatre. Shakespeare at the George's production of *The Merchant of Venice* has been selected as one of 86 amateur theatre companies in the UK to take part in the RSC's Open Stages project, part of a commitment to transform the relationship between amateur and professional theatres.**

Shakespeare at the George will make one of the bard's greatest plays accessible to more people than ever before by providing a captioned performance of this year's production for the first time. The performance, at 7.30pm on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> July, will be suitable for anyone, but will feature subtitles for deaf and hard of hearing patrons. The captioned performance will be delivered by Stagtext,

which provides captioning services to some of the country's most famous theatres, including the National Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe and the Royal Exchange Manchester.

"This is wonderful news for anyone who, like me, is hard of hearing but loves the theatre," said Frances Dewhurst, Director of Cambridgeshire Hearing Help. "Being able to fully enjoy all the elements of a live performance is hugely liberating. Open-air productions are particularly challenging for the hard of hearing because of the acoustics, yet they are rarely captioned. I for one am thrilled that I'll be able to enjoy such a magical experience for the first time in many years."

Performances will run from Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> June to Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2014 in the courtyard of the George Hotel in Huntingdon, starting at 7.30pm (no performance Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> June). Tickets are currently on sale for this year's performance of *The Merchant of Venice* and over seventy percent of the tickets have already been sold. This is even



faster than last year's sell out performance of *Macbeth*. Tickets are available online from [www.satg.org.uk/tickets](http://www.satg.org.uk/tickets). ★



## Award-winning musical now licensed by NODA

What's the best you can usually expect from a brand new locally written and composed musical? At best a hand shake and perhaps a well done here and there. But local duo Ian Cook (Chairman of Waveney Light Opera Group) and Ian Newton have struck gold with their new musical *The Reunion*.

As luck would have it the then NODA President Derek Grattidge ventured east to Beccles to see this new offering, and imagine the joy when the show was awarded The President's Cup at the 2013 NODA National AGM at Peebles. This is no mean achievement and the show is also now being licensed by NODA. You can find out more at [www.noda.org.uk/scripts/the\\_reunion](http://www.noda.org.uk/scripts/the_reunion).

Well done WLOG and watch out Lord Lloyd Webber!

**Terry Rymer**  
NODA East Representative, District 6

## A special evening of entertainment

**I was privileged to attend the Pinewood Special School Spring Variety Concert on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014. This was indeed a special evening dedicated to the music of Karen Carpenter, with a combination of poetry and musical numbers. Guests were invited to sit back at bistro style tables and enjoy the entertainment provided by some 30 young teenagers.**

What a great start to the proceedings as right from the off the audience were invited to clap along and sign to the opening number from the Pinewood Signing Choir, singing and signing to 'Happy' from Pharrell Williams. Poetry was confidently delivered by Sophie King, Josh Nowak, Sam Cawdell and Harry Herbert. Sophie's reading of *The Woodmouse* by Mary Hewitt was particularly enjoyable because of the sensitivity of her interpretation. Drum solos were also well executed by Jason Adekun-Mensah, Ruby Cordioli and Thomas Morrison.

I was very impressed by the song 'Move It', written and performed by the signing choir and members of the Pinewood Arts Award Group, and the first half closed with the signing choir and the audience singing, signing and moving to 'Get Down', also written and composed by the students. The second set came from Toni Lee, a Karen Carpenter tribute singer, performing her repertoire for the audience with backing from the signing choir. There was a definite chemistry here which everyone enjoyed.

Finally, the highlight of the evening was Toni Lee and Year 11 performer Emma Hephher singing together. It was truly magical. I remember coming along to see Pinewood School perform *The King and I* two years ago, and once again Vicki Avery and Tina Hathaway have proved that nothing is impossible. Congratulations to you all. ★

**Colin Ramsdale**



# regionalroundup East Midlands

## Happy Birthday to the Stephen Sondheim Society!

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**As the Stephen Sondheim Society celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, it's a good time to spotlight the work of this organisation, which has its administrative base in Nottingham.**

In the latest copy of the society's magazine 'Sondheim', Steve Aubrey recalls the beginnings of the organisation, sparked by his own interest in West End Sondheim shows like *Side by Side* and *Sweeney Todd*, but also in amateur productions. When he saw that a group in Exeter had started to produce a 'home published' magazine about Sondheim he realised that there might be interest in a national organisation.

Julia McKenzie was more than happy to give the fledgling society her support and is a long-standing patron. Stephen Sondheim himself knew of the society from the start and sent a cheque to join; however, the cheque has never been banked and is now in the society's archive. He is also a patron, always reads the 'Sondheim' magazine and takes an interest in the society's work.

After 20 years the Sondheim Society is well established, with a wealth of activities. The 'Sondheim' magazine is published bi-monthly and the latest edition includes reviews of Sondheim shows and other musical shows from the UK and the rest of the world, along with a review of a new book about Sondheim. It also has its regular UK show calendar, listing all upcoming Sondheim shows from both amateurs and professionals. The society has also amassed so much Sondheim-related information, that last year it passed its large Sondheim archive to Kingston University.

The society also organises group visits to Sondheim (and Sondheim-related) shows, usually at reduced prices and often including the chance to have a meal together with other members before the show. Oh, and there is the annual visit to see a Sondheim show at Theatre de Chatelet in Paris.

An annual highlight is the Stephen Sondheim Student Performer of the Year awards show, which this year was held in May at the Garrick Theatre, London. The standard is very high and those who reach this final stage often go on to enjoy successful careers in theatre.

Members also receive regular news and features via the society's website, and if you're interested you can take a look at [www.sondheim.org](http://www.sondheim.org). ★

## We're on Facebook!



NODA East Midlands now has a Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/NODAEastMidlands](http://www.facebook.com/NODAEastMidlands). Check it out and 'like' our page.



# A Life in Opera

**Regional Representative Phil Williams has written a new book about his life on stage. Here, NODA East Midlands Editor Alex Wood previews Phil's memoir.**

Apart from his family there have been two great enthusiasms in Phil Williams' life: his work on the railways and opera. Phil's memoir *50 Years on the Stage* deals with the latter.

Phil started in a church choir in his native Boldmere, near Sutton Coldfield. He enjoyed his time in the choir very much. I get the impression that just after the war, without so many of the distractions that young people have these days, the choir was something to be taken very seriously, with rehearsals twice a week and services twice on Sunday. While some of the music was fairly humdrum, more demanding pieces were to be relished. The choirmaster, Mr Beckett, like many MDs Phil has worked with since, demonstrated knowledge, expertise and discipline, balanced with friendly respect that brought out the best in his charges.

Phil's first group was the Royal Sutton Players, which he joined in 1953. His first leading role as Don Juan in *Carmen* came a few years later. The director of *Carmen* was keen on realism: in one scene he wanted a real gun to fire a blank. At the dress rehearsal Phil had strict instructions to aim at the back of the stage when Escamillo entered, ensuring that he aimed at least two feet above his head, as even blanks eject a certain amount of debris when the gun is fired. He aimed a good two feet above his head and fired.

*"He did manage to sing his next line: "Just an inch lower down and I should have been shot",*

*although it was not sung with his usual bravo and he did seem several shades paler than he was meant to be. We got through the duet and eventually finished the scene, enabling the stage lights to come up from the dimness of the scene itself. We then found that the back cloth just above the point where Escamillo's head would have been was pitted with a number of small holes. Probably, in all the history of 'Carmen' that entry line from Escamillo has never been so true as that night, and needless to say for the performances we reverted to a dummy gun and a starting pistol off stage."*

Notwithstanding this hiccup the show was a success and Phil's performance won critical praise as well.

The memoir is packed with reminiscences like this. They include the story of a NODA Summer School when *La Boheme* was performed entirely without props or scenery and in rehearsal clothes, to the great acclaim of the audience. Phil also recalls the time when, like Placido Domingo at Covent Garden, he was called upon to play leading roles in two operas in the same week, which is probably still a record.

I especially liked reading about his more recent involvement in some annual opera performances in Spain, such as the mini festivals organised by an ex-pat couple he is friends with over there. They sounded like a joy, not least because the local council lent their willing and generous assistance. How refreshing!

Phil clearly has very fond memories of the companies he has performed with, some of whom were or have become professionals, as



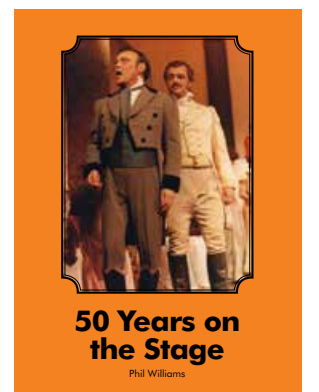
'La Traviata', 1982

well as the MDs and others (like singing coach Frank Lester) who have made lasting and fond impressions upon him. It was also interesting to read about the many different venues Phil has performed in. Understanding the conditions for many amateurs backstage, I especially liked his account of the then recently refurbished (and refurbished again since) Lyceum in Sheffield, where the auditorium was Victorian splendour but backstage had modern dressing rooms with en suite facilities and, in his room at least, even a bed!

Towards the end of the memoir Phil generously offers advice to others who want to become involved in musical theatre. Topics covered include preparation, auditions, working with MDs and directors, performance, voice projection and the importance of family. All wise and helpful words offered by a man with over 60 years of experience since he first became a singer. ★



'De Fledermaus', 2010



NODA has recently published a small run of *50 Years on the Stage* on behalf of Phil Williams. For further information about the memoir, please contact Phil Williams on [phil.williams@noda.org.uk](mailto:phil.williams@noda.org.uk).



# regionalroundup London

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## Councillor's Comments



I can't believe that we are now in June and working hard to get all the nominations in for judging in time for the conference on 6<sup>th</sup> July. This year has been a tremendous one for amateur theatre in London and I know that our regional awards will reflect this, so do come along and join us.

From July, we will be reinstating the training budget in the London region. Through this, we may be able to give some financial support to groups who wish to run training workshops or masterclasses, not only for their own group but also for other groups in the district. There will be a form and some guidelines available at the conference and I will be available for questions.

We have two vacancies for regional representatives in Districts 5 and 6. District 5 covers South London and part of Surrey, and District 6 covers North East London and part of Essex. If you would like to know more about how you can join the NODA London team, please get in touch or speak to me at the conference.

**Jacquie Stedman**  
Councillor, NODA London

# An Amazing Summer School Experience

Stephen Crompton of East Berkshire Operatic Society talks us through the wonders of NODA Theatre Summer School.

For most of us involved in this peculiar hobby our experience of NODA often varies, with both bad and good interactions. But I began to hear rumblings of a 'fun NODA', which runs a summer school where like-minded individuals congregate for a week to share their love of all things theatrical. I decided to investigate, and before you could say "jazz hands" I found myself in a Warwick University sports hall, sweating for England, staring in trepidation at a skipping rope and feeling...happy.

Step back a few hours and I was arriving at Warwick Conferences for the first time. So here was the famous NODA Theatre Summer School, or The Bubble as it is more affectionately known. It would be my home for the next week as I embarked upon my own particular choice of masochism, Musical Theatre in Performance, one of many courses that NODA offers.

Formal registration and obligatory lanyard secured, what followed was one of the most exhausting, challenging and enjoyable weeks I can remember: a week of intensive singing, acting, dancing and, yes, skipping (well, tripping).



Stephen Crompton, back row right, blue shirt

Prior to my NODA baptism of fire, *Legally Blonde* was merely a musical I'd seen once. But after a week which began with vocal auditions in front of industry professionals, and ended with both a patchwork of bruises and a performance of five numbers from the show, to those of us involved it had become something akin to religion.

As I awoke from three hours sleep on the final Saturday morning, I felt the disbelief that it was over. I knew I would miss the group of former strangers who, over the course of only a week, I now had the pleasure of calling 'people who've added me as a friend on Facebook'.

Whether your thing is singing, dancing, acting,

sound, lighting, composing, puppetry or a combination of these things, they're ultimately what The Bubble is about: a unique opportunity to come together with similar individuals and spend a week in total escape from the stresses of the real world, creating bonds with people who share the same joy of performing.

Young or old, NODA Theatre Summer School has something to offer everyone, be it vocal coaching by the resident MD of *Blood Brothers*, being taught advanced dance by the choreographer of *Billy Elliot*, or taking acting classes with some of the most respected tutors in the country. And as for whether I'm going along this year? Reader, I've already booked! ★

# The Ruminations of Natalie Oatham

**We often hear reminiscent tales of the smell of greasepaint, the roar of the crowd and "how it was different in my day". Or should that be the whiff of damp community halls, 200 box steps and the shuffle of family members with a sense of duty?**

Amateur dramatics hasn't always enjoyed a good reputation. It is often talked of in stereotypes, like megalomaniac directors, would-be divas with swollen egos, affairs igniting in the wings, mildewed costumes and toppling plywood sets, matched by acting skills even more wooden and one-dimensional.

We are lucky at East Berkshire Operatic Society (EBOS) to have built a reputation for high quality performances, excellent set design and beautiful costumes. However, all of that comes at a price. It isn't just the financial cost, but also the time of those who take on behind the scenes jobs to enable us to do the thing we love. Thousands of people across the country take part in community theatre. There are more than 2,500 groups in the UK, putting on a staggering 30,000 productions every year.

EBOS for me is my passion, a massive commitment but fun and full of friends. Not only has EBOS been a second home for me since childhood, it has given me the thrill of performing and the opportunity to choreograph and direct. Now more than ever it is important for us to take ownership of our society by sharing the workload and helping to promote and support fundraising activities, both at Pinewood and the Wilde Theatre. Purse strings are tighter and everyone struggles to balance their workload, but more hands make light work. I have had many people tell me they don't know what they could help with, but everyone can contribute. Do you have a great fundraising idea? Could you direct, choreograph or musically direct? Could you work backstage for a show you're not in? Help with publicity? Work front-of-house? Attend a fundraiser? Buy a ticket? The list is endless.

For actors, putting on a show is a commitment, with rehearsals a few evenings a week; for directors, it's a mammoth task night after night. For the stage manager, it's months of building and planning and



one rehearsal to get it right. So why put yourself through it? For me it's the thrill of surprising people with how good it can be and making a professional show everyone can be proud of.

So maybe community theatre isn't all encores and roses. We are wary of financial pressures brought on by the rising cost of mounting a

production, and of having to sacrifice artistic ideas and show choices to ensure we get bums on seats. But for those who take part, the joy it can bring is undeniable.

So perhaps it should be no surprise that while only a few people ever get a shot at making it on the professional stage, there's still huge appetite amongst us amateurs for a shot at that performance high.

Please show support for your society and find a way to get involved. ★

**Natalie Oatham**  
East Berkshire Operatic Society



# regionalroundup North

## Past President and Regional Councillor come to blows

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In May 2014 Regional Councillor Gordon Richardson and Past President Fred Piggford came to blows over the love of a woman. Thankfully it was all in the name of comedy drama, as both were performing in Chester-le-Street Theatre Group's iconic play *Last of the Summer Wine*, with Gordon and Fred playing Foggy and Gifford Bewmont (a self-opinionated special constable), respectively. ★

Fred and Gordon overseen by production director Michelle Coulson

## Coquetdale ADS celebrate junior members

Five junior members of Coquetdale Amateur Dramatic Society (CADS) were recently presented with awards for long service from NODA Regional Councillor Gordon Richardson. The presentation took place on stage at the Jubilee Institute, Rothbury, after the final curtain was lowered on this year's production of *Oklahoma!* in February.

Mark Famelton played the part of Slim, one of the cowboys, and his sister Kirsty took the part of Gertie, the girl with the annoying laugh, while Georgia Garrington played the leading part of Laurey. Mark and Kirsty joined Jesters, CADS's group for younger members, five years ago, and appeared in *Peter Pan*. Georgia joined them the year after and all three enjoyed appearing in *Oliver!*, *The Wizard of Oz* and as three of the von Trapp children in *The Sound of Music*.

They received their NODA long service awards from Gordon Richardson, who also presented CADS certificates to Lois Monks and Charlotte Urwin. Lois and Charlotte have been in the chorus in the last three productions. All five deserve special praise for their loyalty and commitment over the years. Several members of Jesters have progressed into the



Members of Jesters with their youth award certificates

adult group in recent years and have undertaken major parts very successfully. Sadly for CADS, after leaving full time education junior members tend to leave the area; however, some former members have gone into teaching or into full time theatre work. A small group of these former members was in the audience watching *Oklahoma!* and we were delighted to see them backstage after the performance. As one of them said, "CADS played a huge part in our lives for years." ★

**Joan Wilkinson**  
Coquetdale ADS



Photography courtesy of www.stagedoorphotography.co.uk

## Heart-warming visit for West End Musical Theatre members

Some principal cast members from West End Musical Theatre visited Freeman Hospital Children's Heart Ward recently, hoping to give some joy to the children by giving them the chance to see characters from *The Wizard of Oz* in costume. It was a humbling experience for all concerned, but it was most worthwhile to see so many smiles from patients, visitors and staff alike.

Alex Easten, 23, from Wideopen, who will play the Tinman in West End Musical Theatre's

upcoming production, is no stranger himself to Freeman Hospital. At the moment he is on the waiting list for a heart procedure after being diagnosed with atrial fibrillation last year. Alex is very young to have this condition but has every faith in the doctors who will be looking after him.

West End Musical Theatre Company's production of *The Wizard of Oz* (RSC version) will play at Northern Stage, Newcastle Upon Tyne, the week commencing 24<sup>th</sup> June 2014.



## Survival in tough times

In the autumn of 2012, our funds having fallen over several years due to, yes, you guessed it, lack of bums on seats and escalating costs, our board of management decided to give it a final go. *Jekyll and Hyde* was chosen as our 2013 production but tickets did not sell as well as we anticipated. The media was very sympathetic and gave us excellent press, with television and radio coverage. Posters and flyers were also widely distributed and social media contact was continually pushed. We did not think we could have done more.

The outcome was that the production was an almighty financial flop, leaving the society with only a few hundred pounds in the bank. We thought we were finished; or were we? In response we planned a production at a smaller venue, hoping to raise funds to help us survive. This event marginally increased our bank account but was not enough for the society to continue.

At this point, as a group we all wanted to stay together and a plan was devised to create a management theatre group, supported by a commercial company who would provide financial support. As a result of this, the cast of the newly formed West End Musical Theatre Company are presently rehearsing for *The Wizard of Oz*, which we are performing in June. The West End Operatic Society is currently having a production free year, but we are fundraising and will return in April 2015 with *Hairspray*.

Watch this space. Look out for us in a future edition when I will let you know if we have survived.

**D. Coleman**  
Treasurer, WEOS

## Past President's granddaughter follows in footsteps



Fred, Justine and Hannah

One of NODA's priorities this year is youth, and it is always gratifying to see the number of young people who wish to take to the stage. It is equally pleasing to see young people who are keen on backstage positions, which are equally as important.

Past NODA President Fred Piggford, who is a member of Fatfield Musical Stage Society, was recently taking part onstage in his society's production of *The King and I*, with his daughter Justine acting as ticket secretary and 11 year old granddaughter Hannah content to be in the 'black', helping with props backstage. This hobby of ours is open to all ages in all fields of operation. Well done Hannah! ★









# So you still want to be a stage manager?

In his second instalment for **NODA TODAY**, **Graham Coulson**, General Manager of scenery supplier **The Border Studio**, discusses the importance of finding the right set. **The Border Studio** is **NODA's** recommended scenery supplier for *The Slipper and the Rose*.

Hello again everyone and welcome to the next instalment of 'the life of a stage manager'. I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for all the positive remarks received about the first instalment.

And so to business; I thought we might take a gander at the first steps that you will need to take once you have been committed, I mean appointed of course! The first thing to remember is that you will be part of a very creative team who, in most cases, will be very passionate about the production that they are about to embark upon and will probably have a 'great vision' of how they would like to see the show production come to fruition. Your first task will be to source a set that will best match the team's creative vision, and this will involve you contacting theatrical contractors in order to ascertain whether or not they can supply a set and what that set might consist of.

After gathering the said information, it is important to carefully reflect on the suitability and size of the set for your performance space so that you are confident that the set will both fit and meet the creative brief. For me it is important that you explore all the options that are on offer, and might I perhaps suggest that you draw up a grid that features both the pros and cons of the sets available.

Why do I make the above points I hear you ask? As I have said earlier you are part of the team and you will have to make recommendations to your fellow team members, confident that you have explored all options and that your final recommendation best fits the bill of the creative brief. Equally, as you will be responsible for sourcing, building and making the set work, so that the production meets the expectations of the creative team, the performers and indeed those individuals who come to see the production, you need to be confident that you are able to work with a set because ultimately you will be held to account.

Making a recommendation about a particular set might be a very fraught discussion. Surely not I hear you say, but despite your best efforts your recommendation might not fit the bill exactly. Might I quietly suggest to you that this is where your excellent skills of tact and diplomacy very much come into play? It is at this point, in my experience, that you need to stand firm in your resolve as you are the one who will be held to account if things go wrong.

Having said all of the above I think that this is very much the first of the things you should do in terms of your role as Company



Stage Manager, and the importance of this cannot be underestimated. Once agreement has been reached then you can move onwards and upwards to the next stage, working closely- well perhaps not too closely- with the producer and director right at the start of the production process.

Enough rambles for now and next time I think we should perhaps look at how you can build a small team of expertise around your role.

Best wishes for the coming summer and as ever kind regards. ★

Aye  
Graham

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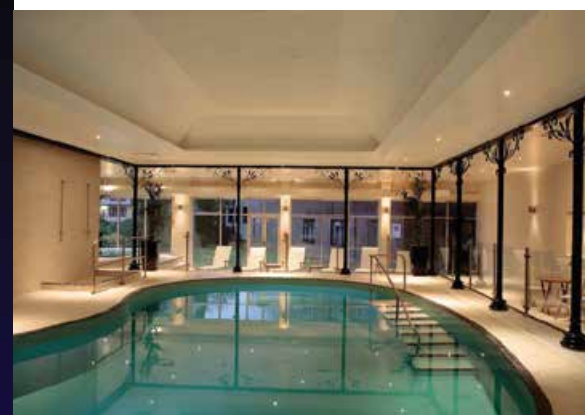
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Felbridge Hotel and Spa



## noda AGM and Presidential Gala 2014

26th – 28th September 2014

**The Felbridge Hotel & Spa, East Grinstead**

London Road, East Grinstead, RH19 2BH

Tel: 01342 337700

**We look forward to welcoming you to this annual NODA event, which in addition to its regular series of meetings, has a wealth of entertainment and social activities to encourage networking with NODA members from around the country.**

The Felbridge Hotel and Spa is located approximately 15 minutes drive from Gatwick Airport, 10 minutes from the M23, and a short drive from East

Grinstead town centre and railway station. The Chakra Spa and Fitness Centre provides an extensive range of treatments, and has a hairdressing salon, fully equipped gym, swimming pool, sauna and steam room. The venue also boasts two tennis courts and has ample onsite secure parking.

A walk along the historic East Grinstead High Street will take you back through 800 years of Sussex heritage, with many historic half-timbered buildings and open hall houses. Some buildings

date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and there are splendid examples from Georgian and Regency times as well.

East Grinstead is a hub for four counties, for this is the only place where East Sussex and West Sussex meet Surrey and Kent. The Greenwich Meridian also runs through the town and the prime meridian that separates east from west is celebrated at East Court, the town's 1768 mansion set within its own parkland.





Standen House



John Barnes



## Schedule of Events

### Thursday

(Please note, this is not included in the main package)

Dinner (lounge suit/informal)

### Friday

Council meeting

Regional committee members' meeting

Dinner (dress informal) with table magician and quiz

### Saturday

Visit to Standen House by coach (booking required) or presentation on community theatre safety by Neil Maidman from NODASafe

Annual General Meeting

Presidential inauguration

National programme and poster awards

Open forum

Informal meeting with council and regional representatives

President's reception for all delegates in the ballroom foyer

Presidential gala dinner in ballrooms 2 and 3 (black tie)

Entertainment from Tunbridge Wells Operatic and Dramatic Society, with dancing to 'It's the Heartbeats' dance band

### Sunday

Council meeting

Presentation by Andy Worden, Editor East Grinstead Courier & Crawley News, on how to engage with regional newspapers

Lunch available (direct payment to hotel)

## Visit to Standen House

### Saturday 27th September

Just on the southern outskirts of the town lies Standen, an arts and crafts family home owned by the National Trust.

The house and gardens were created in the 1890s by James Beale and his wife Margaret. With the help of architect Philip Webb and William Morris' firm of designers, they created a unique house, notable not just for its arts and crafts interiors but also its homely charm. Open seven days a week in peak season, Standen also boasts 12 acres of hillside gardens with sweeping views over the Medway Valley.

The visit to Standen will be by coach for a private guided tour of the house and will leave the hotel at 9.30am on Saturday morning. The price is £25 per person inclusive and the trip is limited to 40 people. This price applies to all, including National Trust members, because this is a private tour. To book your place, please complete the relevant section of the booking form, with payment.

For more information on the property, visit

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/standen](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/standen)

## Packages

Felbridge Hotel & Spa has 120 beautifully furnished en-suite bedrooms with flat screen TVs, high speed internet access, Hypnos luxury beds and security locks. All public and outdoor areas are monitored by CCTV.

Below are the packages you can choose from for the weekend. Please note, all prices include VAT and a £25 single supplement applies per room, per night (including extra nights) if not sharing.

#### Package A

##### Full weekend (Friday to Sunday)

Two nights of accommodation (Friday and Saturday), two breakfasts (Saturday and Sunday), dinner and entertainment (Friday), morning coffee, lunch, presidential reception, dinner, entertainment and ball (Saturday)

**£250 per person sharing**

#### Package B

##### Part weekend (Saturday to Sunday)

Morning coffee, lunch, afternoon refreshments, presidential reception, dinner, entertainment and ball (with bed and breakfast Saturday night/Sunday morning)

**£165 per person sharing**

#### Package C

##### Residential evening entertainment (Saturday to Sunday)

Dinner, entertainment and ball (with bed and breakfast Saturday night/Sunday morning)

**£145 per person sharing**

#### Package D

##### Non residential (Saturday)

Dinner, entertainment and ball only  
**£40 per person**

If you wish, you may stay extra nights. The prices below are per night and per person, and include breakfast.

**Thursday: £89**

**Saturday: £99**

**Sunday: £79**

#### Payment

All cheques should be made payable to 'National Operatic & Dramatic Association' (post dated cheques are not accepted). Please note, for packages A and B a non-refundable deposit of £50 per person is required when booking. Payment of the remaining costs is due by 31st August 2014. Packages C and D must be paid in full at the time of booking.

Any additional extras, for example Sunday lunch, telephone calls and newspapers, are to be paid direct to the Felbridge Hotel & Spa upon departure.

For full details, please go to [www.noda.org.uk](http://www.noda.org.uk)



# noda AGM and Presidential Gala 2014

## Booking Form

Please complete this form in block capitals. The closing date for bookings is Saturday 9th August 2014.

### PLEASE ENCLOSE AN SAE WITH YOUR FORM

Organiser Name (1) \_\_\_\_\_ Region \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Tel \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Tel \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

Member status (individual/joint/society/regional rep/corporate/exhibitor etc) \_\_\_\_\_

Members of your party (full name and member status)

(2) \_\_\_\_\_ Status \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_ Status \_\_\_\_\_

(4) \_\_\_\_\_ Status \_\_\_\_\_

Member name	Package	Room type (single, twin, double)	Extra nights

Please specify any dietary, mobility, or other requirements \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to be seated near a specific delegate(s) at the presidential gala dinner please tell us in the space below. We will do our best to sit you with your chosen delegate(s), but cannot guarantee it.

## Standen House Visit

Number of people \_\_\_\_\_ Total cost at £25 per person \_\_\_\_\_

Please send your completed booking form and cheque (payable to 'National Operatic and Dramatic Association') to:

**NODA National AGM, c/o Bob Cousins, The Tarns, 34 Redcrest Gardens, Camberley, GU15 2DU**

Email: [bob.cousins@noda.org.uk](mailto:bob.cousins@noda.org.uk) Telephone: 01276 23130

# Authentic from **top** to **toe**

**In his second instalment for NODA TODAY, Utopia Costumes' Ewan Campbell provides tips on how to ensure your costumes and wigs are as authentic as possible. Utopia is NODA's recommended costume supplier for *The Slipper and the Rose*.**

If we go to see a West End show, we have probably paid a lot of money for the ticket and we have an expectation of what we are going to see. We have probably listened to the sound track and looked at pictures or trailers for the production online.

If you went to a professional show on three separate performances you might see different people playing the same part, but this would be the only thing that would be different. Each actor would be dressed the same as the one before; they would have the same hairstyle and hair colour, and in many cases they will be the same size and build. What's the reason for this? We as an audience want to see what we expect to see and what we have paid for. In long running shows like *Phantom of the Opera* has anyone ever seen a blond Christine Daeé?

So what has this got to do with costumes I hear you ask? Our societies and groups spend so much money trying to make their shows look like the original or latest professional production by hiring or making sets and costumes based on what has been seen on the West End, on tours or online. But many people who perform as a hobby choose to ignore the importance of what goes on their head, what goes under their costume and what goes on their feet.

### Hairstyles and Wigs

All hairstyles change with fashion and are an essential part of creating a character and recalling the period of a piece. We all have busy lives, and if you don't have time to do your hair each night before a performance, then invest in a wig or two.

An allocation for wigs should always be put into the costume budget as most period shows require appropriate hairstyles. Wigs are easily available



and relatively cheap to buy, and can also be hired from professional wig dressers. It isn't sensible to buy a cheap party wig that looks nylon and shiny, so buy a good quality wig that is close to the desired colour and that you can style or have styled for you. Most societies or groups have members who are or who know a hairdresser that can help to style wigs. This little bit of effort gives your audience more value for money as you look more like the character you are attempting to portray.

While so much concentration is focused on singing and acting, hair is often neglected. For example, Cosette goes on stage with her own hair scraped back and a couple of lank ringlets, and the girls in the ensemble have modern backcombed quiffs. If the professionals did this, as an audience we would not be impressed and we would complain that it was wrong. There are lots of excuses made, ranging from people worrying that wigs will fall off, to complaining that they make performing too hot, but you would never hear any of these statements being uttered by a professional actor. It is part of the job to wear what you have to in order to create a character, and we as amateurs should be no different.

### Underwear

What goes under a costume is just as important as the costume itself. All female performers should invest in nude underwear or a nude

all-in-one to wear under your costumes, as it will give your costume a better shape. Male performers should invest in fitted underwear, especially in period pieces and pantomimes, when you might be wearing tights. Most professional performers also wear dancebelts.

In my years as a costumier the need for sturdy undergarments was never more apparent than in a production of *Oklahoma!* when Curly, resplendent in full gear with his soaring tenor voice came on singing 'Oh What a Beautiful Morning'. As cowboys' chaps and gunbelts frame a certain area it goes without saying that if he had been wearing appropriate underwear beneath his trousers, then the audience would have been watching his face instead.

### Shoes

These finish off the costume, so try to wear appropriate footwear at all times. Men generally have it easier, but investing in black and brown brogues, patent shoes, a pair of working boots, an old pair of shoes with the upper painted with emulsion for gangsters, and a pair of cowboy boots will cover you for most productions. In most cases, ladies need pairs of black and nude character shoes, and metallic coloured sandals or dance shoes.

It is worth stressing the importance of producing the best visual product for your audience because they have an expectation of what they are going to see. Next year there will be many productions of *Sister Act*, but how many companies will have Whoopi Goldberg in them? However, your audience will expect someone like her to be there because that is what they think they are paying to see. If your company doesn't have anyone like her to play Delores Van Cartier, while we have time to think about it, we have to find a way of creating someone who looks like her using costumes, wigs and make up, instead of ignoring the problem. ★

**Ewan Campbell**  
Utopia Costumes

Photos taken by Raymond Wood. Wigs by Pat Ellis of Utopia Costumes. Costumes by Utopia Costumes. Downfield Musical Society's (Dundee) production of 'Oliver!'.



# regionalroundup North West

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## Councillor's Comments

The May Day Bank Holiday weekend saw the North West Regional AGM and Awards Weekend, which I believe was the biggest we have ever hosted. More than 800 members attended over the course of the weekend, with our newest and youngest trainee member, Keegan Jones McCaw, at the tender age of just 11 months old. We were also delighted to welcome the NODA National President Bert Lumsden and his wife Anne, and we hope they enjoyed their time with us.

We moved to a new venue this year, The Mercure Hotel, Manchester Piccadilly, right in the heart of Manchester. Of course there were some minor teething problems but by and large the whole event went really well, thanks in no small part to your North West Committee and the absolutely exemplary staff at the hotel, who were just so helpful.

The Saturday night saw 250 people attend the youth dinner and awards. The dinner was preceded by two workshops, which were enjoyed greatly by those who did attend, but it would have been great to have seen a few more attendees there. On Sunday, the AGM was followed by another glittering dinner and awards ceremony in the evening, this time for 557 guests. A fascinating and well attended workshop on Monday morning rounded off the weekend, before we all went home exhausted but delighted with another successful conference.

A big thank you to all those who attended, and to those who did not, you missed a great weekend. Do put it in your diary for next year!

We have only two changes on the committee this year. The new representative for District 8 is Peter Johnson and the new representatives for District 12 are Lloyd Bamber and Luke Taberer, who are acting as an individual. I am sure you will join me in welcoming all three of them to the NODA family. I hope that they have a long and happy tenure with us and do please continue to invite them to your productions.

While on the subject of inviting representatives, do remember that you can always invite me to any of your productions, as well as and not just instead of your regional representative. I will be thrilled and delighted to attend if at all possible.

This year, in view of the new conference weekend venue, we would greatly welcome your feedback on anything and everything as we strive to recognise the huge wealth of talent in the North West. Only by telling us can we hope to address and hopefully resolve the issues that are of interest or concern to you and your society, so please help us to help you.

**Christine Hunter Hughes**  
Councillor, NODA North West



# NODA North West AGM

Under the glittering chandeliers of the ballroom in the Mercure Manchester Piccadilly hotel, more than 800 NODA North West members gathered for their annual awards.

Now in their second year, the youth awards brought together the future of amateur theatre from across the region. Mossley AODS were the cats who got the cream, taking the Best Youth Production on the night.

The experienced hands of the region's adult membership gathered for a bustling dinner and ceremony, crowned by the special

achievement award being presented to the hugely popular, judging by the audience's cheers, Nick Cupit of CODYS/Encore Productions.

The top titles for the adult awards went to Newton Le Willows for Best Pantomime, Abbey Musical Society for Best Concert, Rochdale Phoenix for Best G&S, Todmorden AODS for Best Drama and Ashton Operatic Society for Best Musical.

The celebrations went on into the early hours, with a sing-along round the piano, on the dance floor and at the bar.



## Adult Awards

Best supporting male in a musical:  
James Shields as Leo Bloom, *The Producers*, Lancaster ADS  
Best supporting female in a musical:  
Vicky Stott as Miss Berta, *Acorn Antiques*, Altrincham Garrick  
Best supporting male in a drama:  
Greg Jones as Waiter, *Dinner*, Neston Players  
Best supporting female in a drama:  
Sue Clark as Jan, *Ladies Day*, Hyde Little Theatre  
Best male comedy performance:  
Michael Daws as Sarah the Dame, *Dick Whittington*, Macclesfield Majestics  
Best female comedy performance:  
Tia Gill as Boyka, *Eurobeat*, Neston Players  
Best staging:  
*Sweet Charity*, Newton Le Willows  
Best choreography:  
Jean Griffiths, *Mack and Mabel*, Ashton Operatic Society

Best musical direction:  
Steven Mercer, *Sweeney Todd*, All Saints Musical  
Best leading male in a musical:  
Nicholas Gunn as Bill Snibson, *Me and My Girl*, Blackburn Musical Theatre Company  
Best leading female in a musical:  
Nicky Williams as Mrs Overall, *Acorn Antiques*, Southport Spotlights  
Best leading male in a drama:  
Glyn Morton as Norman, *On Golden Pond*, Centenary Players  
Best leading female in a drama:  
Pat Baker as Mrs Monaghan, *The Anastasia File*, Ormskirk TC  
Best artistic direction of a musical:  
Clark Wilkinson, *Gypsy*, Maryport AODS  
Best artistic direction of a drama:  
Neil Coe, *Blood Brothers*, Whitefield AODS  
Best pantomime:  
*Adventure in Pantoland*, Newton Le Willows  
Best concert or review:  
*Cupcake Cabaret*, Abbey Musical Society

Best G&S production:  
*HMS Pinafore*, Rochdale Phoenix  
Best drama:  
*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, Todmorden AODS  
Best musical:  
*Mack and Mabel*, Ashton Operatic Society  
Special achievement award:  
Nick Cupit, CODYS/Encore Productions  
Best poster:  
*Yeoman of the Guard*, Three Towns Operatic  
Best basic programme:  
*Back to the Eighties*, Chorley Youth Theatre  
Best standard programme:  
*Little Shop of Horrors*, Workington and District  
Best deluxe programme:  
*La Cage Aux Folles*, Walney TC  
Drama festival runner-up:  
*The Crucible*, Hand-In-Hand  
Drama festival winner:  
*Kes*, Mossley AODS



All images courtesy of www.premier-photographic.com

## Youth Awards

Best supporting male in a musical:  
Nick Gartland as John, *Miss Saigon*, CODYS  
Best supporting female in a musical:  
Sarah Hughes as Madame Thenardier, *Les Misérables*, Stagedright Youth Theatre  
Best male comedy performance:  
Matthew Crossley as Walsh and William Elder, Fred and Bert, *The Peace Child*, PADOS  
Best female comedy performance:  
Molly Hirst as Simple Simon, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, Grange and District AOS

Best youth male in an adult production:  
Frank Williams as Billy Cooper, *Kes*, Mossley AODS  
Best youth female in an adult performance:  
Erika Pickard as Mary Tilford, *The Children's Hour*, Altrincham Garrick  
Best staging:  
*Thoroughly Modern Millie*, Clifton Academy  
Best choreographer:  
Dominic Lewis and Ellie Atherton, *Grease*, CODYS  
Best musical direction:  
Helen Clarkson, *Les Misérables*,

Todmorden Hippodrome Youth Theatre  
Best leading male in a musical:  
Marc Smith as The Cat in the Hat, *Seussical The Musical*, Stage One 2000  
Best leading female in a musical:  
Katie Bell as Grizabella, *Cats*, CATS  
Best artistic direction of a musical:  
Danny Watkins, *Phantom of the Opera*, Phoenix Youth Theatre  
Best youth production:  
*Cats*, Mossley AODS





# regionalroundup Scotland

## Monifieth Youth Theatre: An Inspiration to All

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Regular visitors to Monifieth Theatre were advised to clear their diaries for two weekends in March when Monifieth Youth Theatre (MYT) took to the stage with their production of C.S. Lewis's classic tale, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*. This youth group has already displayed their considerable acting talents on more than one occasion, but this time they went several steps further.

Creative Director Libby Barton explained: "Members of the youth group range from eleven to seventeen years old, which is really quite a gap when it comes to finding suitable plays." The solution decided upon was to divide the group into two different sections, each catering for a different age range. It was decided that the younger section would perform *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* and the older section would be in charge of everything else. This, of course, meant that while the younger section concentrated on learning lines, movements and dances, the older members had to learn all there is to know about the production of a show. It was an ambitious project, but everyone was keen to rise to the challenge. A number of young members are interested in pursuing a career in theatre, so this project provided them with a wealth of experience and knowledge.



Set dressing  
- a game of  
thrones?

Earlier this year I was invited to see how preparations were coming along, and I have to say I was highly impressed. The energy and enthusiasm could be felt surging around the hall as all manner of jobs were tackled. The young leaders, Libby Barton and Lesley Lorimer, are to be congratulated on the way they motivated and organised the group. The young members seemed to shrink from nothing as they set about bringing what they imagined to life, and I saw four shabby old chairs being spray painted with gold and silver and draped with lush material to transform them into thrones.

In August, the tables will be turned when the older members will perform and the younger section of the group will take care of the production. They are all learning the responsibilities that come with being part of a team, such as the importance of keeping quiet backstage, turning up on time and being able to rely on each other. The young people are meeting many challenges with an enthusiasm and determination which is an inspiration to us all. ★

**Roger Buist**  
Regional Representative, District 2

## The #bearinablanket project needs you!

Local business The Border Studio has started the #bearinablanket project and we want YOU to get involved. This is a new charitable initiative for which blankets and matching jumpers for teddy bears are knitted and sent to Little Stars of Luxor, a charity based in Egypt, to be distributed amongst poor and disadvantaged children.

Check out The Border Studio's Facebook page at facebook.com/theborderstudio1 for more details or get in touch at bearinablanket@gmail.com. For more information about Little Stars go to [www.littlestars-luxor.org](http://www.littlestars-luxor.org). Any help at all is hugely appreciated by The Border Studio and Little Stars of Luxor. ★

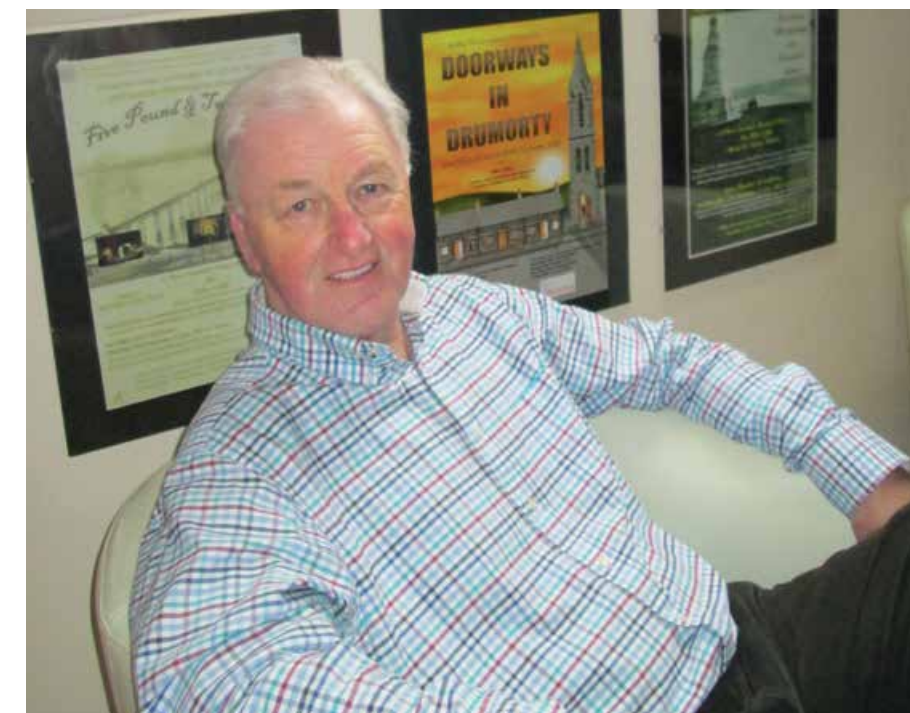
Tamsin Reinsch

# Capturing Scotland on the Stage

Back in the nineties writer Mike Gibb was trekking around the world to watch musical theatre in his dual role as editor of UK magazine *Masquerade*, and as UK and European correspondent for the US glossy *Show Music*. In this time Mike was increasingly frustrated by the lack of a real Scottish musical, not one that portrayed a fanciful image of the country like *Brigadoon*, and decided to try to do something about it.

Six long and often difficult years later *A Land Fit for Heroes*, with music by Graham Stephen, eventually came to the stage, telling the story of an ordinary Scottish family caught up in the turbulent times of the Highland clearances, the First World War and the rise of socialism in post-war Glasgow. The show gathered rave reviews and even made the front cover of the NODA national magazine in 2002. Mike now had the bug and *Mother of All the Peoples*, based on the gritty life story of missionary Mary Slessor and with a fine score by composer Mairi Paton Warren, followed in double quick time. The show will grace the stage of the Dundee Rep Theatre in April 2015 to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mary's death.

For several years thereafter Mike became entrenched in Dundee, completing a trilogy of musicals on Dundee themes, including *Five Pound & Twa Bairns* with Mairi again providing the music, and *Sunday Mornings on Dundee Law* with music by Kevin Walsh and Malcolm Dowie. *Five Pound & Twa Bairns* has enjoyed



three sell out runs at Dundee Rep and was recently described by TV broadcaster and journalist Lesley Riddoch as "an utterly brilliant musical".

But Mike is not just a writer of musicals, as along the way he has turned out a number of plays. *Children of the Sea* was inspired by the Eyemouth fishing disaster, while *Lest We Forget* was commissioned by Aberdeen Performing Arts to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Piper Alpha disaster. Mike did subsequently manage to distance himself from disasters by adapting Lorna Moon's book of short stories,

*Doorways in Drumorty*, into a very funny stage play of the same name.

Recently Mike came into contact with Stagescripts, who agreed to publish and manage the rights for the musicals mentioned above and the plays *Doorways in Drumorty* and *Children of the Sea*. If you would like further information on any of these works, they're all available from [www.stagescripts.com](http://www.stagescripts.com). You can also contact Stagescripts at [sales@stagescripts.com](mailto:sales@stagescripts.com) or by calling 0845 686 0611. To find out more about individual shows and to hear music samples, visit Mike's website at [www.hamepages.com](http://www.hamepages.com). ★

## One Stop Show Shop

In November 2013 new website [www.OneStopShowShop.com](http://www.OneStopShowShop.com) was launched by Eddie McDowell, current President of Allegro (NODA Scotland District 6). It was created, in part, out of the frustration of not being able to effectively publicise Allegro's vast costume-hire store to other theatre groups, or to generate sufficient costume hires to cover ongoing costume storage costs.

Eddie researched the issue further through the use of online surveys which he was pleased NODA helped distribute to its members. From the survey results, he concluded that theatre groups in the UK were struggling in a number of ways, from sourcing costumes, props and sets, to finding the right expertise and publicity methods.

With these issues in mind, Eddie set about developing [www.OneStopShowShop.com](http://www.OneStopShowShop.com) and is delighted with the response from theatre groups and service providers so far. Eddie said: "I am really pleased with how the website has been received. The website is completely free for theatre groups to use and has been set up based on the NODA district model, which means that each NODA district effectively has its own customised website!" ★



## Reasons to celebrate

Pantheon Club, Glasgow, have been informed by Josef Weinberger that their 2013 production of *Calamity Jane* was the highest grossing amateur production in the whole of the UK... ever!

Congratulations to Markinch Amateur Operatic Society and St Andrews Amateur Operatic Society, who both celebrate their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversaries in 2014!

The Beacon Arts Centre in Inverclyde celebrated its first anniversary in January 2014, building on the impressive track record of the Greenock Arts Guild. The new building is part of the wider regeneration of industrial land along the Inverclyde waterfront and will help to develop local talent and present the best national companies and artists. ★





# regionalroundup South East

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## Councillor's Comments

I look forward to welcoming you to the National Conference at The Felbridge Hotel and Spa, East Grinstead, which is being held from 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> September. The booking form is contained in this edition of NODA TODAY and is also available on the NODA website. This is a great opportunity to network with members from other regions.

It gives me great pleasure to report that my successor as Regional Councillor will be Mrs Kay Rowan, Regional Representative for District 14. Kay will be formally elected at the National AGM and someone to fill her regional vacancy is actively being sought.

### Regional AGM and Presentation of Awards: 29<sup>th</sup> June

The South East AGM and the presentation of awards are being held at The Royal Hippodrome Theatre, Eastbourne, on 29<sup>th</sup> June from 2pm. I do hope as many of you as possible will come along to this event, which gives you the opportunity to meet up with members from across the region.

### Programme and Poster Competition

If you intend to have your programme entered for the programme and poster competition and you include additional information about NODA, please do ensure you have the up-to-date information, which is available in the members' area of the NODA website. Please do not copy what has been done by the previous compiler!



### Changes on the South East Committee

Mr Bob Cousins, who has been Treasurer for this region since 2006 and previously for the southern area, is retiring from the post and will be succeeded by Mr Keith Smithers. However, Bob will continue to deal with bookings for the National AGM. Mrs Margaret Fields, District 17, is also retiring. Her post will be taken over by Mr Stuart Ardern, previously of District 13, who will be replaced by Ms Marie Coltman, who will

also continue in her role as Membership Secretary.

### In Memoriam

We mourn the loss of the following:  
**Mrs Doreen Norris**, Worthing, former regional representative in the southern area  
**Mr Hugh Orchard**, Life President of Wadhurst Dramatic Club  
**Mr Peter Gardner**, Haslemere Players and Grayshott Stagers

### Items for the Magazine

Please do remember to send in news and gossip for the magazine. I am certain there is more going on out in the region than gets reported to me or to members of the committee. We do really like to know about your successes or failures, or problems which have been solved, as well as any celebrations.

**John W Barnes**  
Councillor, NODA South East

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# Celebrating 125 years of theatre

**Tunbridge Wells Operatic and Dramatic Society, or TWODS as it is more commonly known, is the seventh oldest amateur theatre society in the country and is celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.**

Formed in 1889 by a small group of actors who built their own stage and scenery, the first production was of two plays, *A Blighted Being* and *My Preserver*, both performed at the local gymnasium. The first musical show to be performed was *The Pirates of Penzance*, followed by a variety of straight plays, Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas and one or two grand operas. The society moved to The Opera House in 1902, and in 1904 staged a rousing performance of *The Mikado*.

In June 1939, the Tunbridge Wells Assembly Hall was opened and TWODS were invited to perform the first show at the venue, which was a great honour. After 85 productions and 63 years at The Opera House, in 1967 the society moved its shows to the theatre and still performs there today.

TWODS is always looking for something new to present to audiences and was proud to perform the South East premiere of *Evita* in 2002, *The Boy Friend* in 1961, the newly released *Me and My Girl* in 1997 and *Mack and Mabel* in 2000. To celebrate the society's 125<sup>th</sup> year, they staged *Oliver!* in April and are proud to be performing *The Merry Widow* in November.

TWODS is a registered charity and has donated a staggering £25,000 to local charities with the profits from their shows. They also have many long serving members in the society, such as Company Manager Sadie Williams who has clocked up 67 years of service, and would like to thank all the members for their loyalty and hard work in keeping the society alive. Thanks also to the fantastic audiences who support TWODS and enable them to continue to give back to the local community. ★

# Celebrating Seaford Musical Theatre Juniors

Seaford Musical Theatre Juniors



**In 2014, Seaford Musical Theatre Juniors (SMTJ) reached the finals of the Epic Awards, as one of over sixty thousand voluntary arts and crafts groups that provide regular opportunities for local engagement across the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Although they were not one of the overall winners, SMTJ deserve to be congratulated for the great achievement of reaching the final stages.**

SMTJ was created in 2011 and aimed to support community awareness and collaboration, provide low cost local entertainment and performance-based learning for adults and young people, and maintain a community venue for other charity and social groups.

The founders intended to offer opportunities for young people at minimal or no cost, which was especially helpful for families who had several children wishing to take part. This meant recruiting volunteers with performing or teaching experience who were willing to participate without payment, but instead to receive 'gift in kind' rehearsal space from SMT at the Barn Theatre.

Wherever possible, they wanted their performances and workshops to be youth-led (with appropriate adult support and guidance) and recruited a Junior Musical Director, 16 year old Phil McMullen, who led a junior musical orchestra. They also appointed junior directors and producers from the older members, along

with junior technical and front-of-house crews. Because of their innovative approach to youth inclusion, they were delighted to be awarded the British Youth Council 'Youth On Board' Inspiring Project Award in September 2012, along with our Young Mayor's Community Group Award.

SMTJ were delighted in February to welcome Rotary Club of Seaford President Mike Logan, along with Mike Hemmings, to midweek rehearsals for *Grease*. A cheque for £500 was presented to Barn Theatre President Shar Turnbull to kick start SMTJ's appeal to equip the orchestra pit with permanent instruments that can be used for productions and band rehearsals, and to give tuition to young people at minimal or no cost. ★

## The Prompt in the Corner



I sit in the corner and nobody sees me;  
I know every line in the play.  
The actors ignore me – they think they don't need me  
Until they forget what to say.  
They stand centre stage and hope that their lapse  
Goes unnoticed by those all around;  
And they sigh with relief when I prompt from the wings,  
With the words that they haven't found.  
I follow the script, I know everyone's part,  
I know when a pause is intended.  
If I prompt when I shouldn't, or don't when I should  
Then somebody's surely offended.  
There's no curtain call or applause at the end  
For the prompt in the corner – their emergency friend.  
If I wasn't there there'd be panic and fright,  
So I sit in my corner night after night.  
But the best time of all, though it may seem absurd  
Is the time when I sit there, not saying a word!

### Barbara Liddle

Wadhurst Dramatic Club  
Dedicated to Rebecca de Saintonge, *Flapper!*,  
January 2014





# regionalroundup South West

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## Kidz R Us turns 20 and sets its sights high

**Kidz R Us, the award-winning  
youth theatre company based in St  
Ives, is hatching big plans as it turns 20.**

In December 1993, Phil Barnett and Margaret Banfield, from St Ives Operatic Society, assembled a small group of local children to stage a one-off concert to raise money for Save the Children. It was such a success that the audience begged for more, and Kidz R Us was established the following year.

Since then, Kidz R Us has produced more than 70 shows and won numerous awards under Phil's leadership. The summer of 2013 was its most productive season yet, with four major shows running concurrently, including *The Wizard of Oz* and *Les Misérables: School Edition*.

The typical Kidz R Us year involves more than 100 young people from a wide range of backgrounds, aged seven and up. Kidz R Us is dedicated to getting young people involved in the performing arts and behind-the-scenes crafts, to support their development and the wider community. It's all about giving young, local people the chance to develop new skills and self-esteem, gain confidence in their own abilities and possibly discover direction for a future career.

Now turning 20, Kidz R Us will be celebrating with a year of special events on top of a packed calendar of shows, including *The Little Mermaid*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and *Grease* (from the 'graduate' group).

The group is also hoping to seal the purchase of the remainder of the converted Wesleyan chapel where it made its home in 1999. The company desperately needs bigger and improved backstage facilities in order to stage the productions that its audiences of local residents and holidaymakers know and love, and to offer more opportunities for local young people. The plans include additional rehearsal and dressing rooms, a workshop, costume store and outdoor theatre space, as well as creating new facilities for use by the wider community and generating valuable savings for the theatre group.

To find out more or to make a donation, contact Phil Barnett on [phil.barnett@noda.org.uk](mailto:phil.barnett@noda.org.uk) or call 01736 797 007. ★



*'The Wizard of Oz', 2013, courtesy of Kidz R Us*

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Courtesy of Ian Goodenough



## NODA South West's 2014 Awards Gala Dinner

**NODA South West Editor Matt Heaton reports on a sparkling  
awards evening.**

NODA South West's 2014 awards dinner on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March at the St. Mellion International Resort in Cornwall was a fantastic evening, celebrating everything great about amateur theatre in the South West.

There was good company, good food and a fantastic venue. The awards themselves were presented by John Barnes in his capacity as Vice President of NODA, with excellent supporting video and music effects, provided most generously by Enlightened Lighting of Bristol, giving the evening a real professional feel. To be nominated was an achievement in itself, but amateur theatre was the real winner, showing the depth and range of talent in the region.

Thanks to Ian Goodenough, Graeme Savage and the NODA South West Committee organising team for putting together a wonderful event, as we now look forward to the 2015 event at the Marriott Hotel in Bristol.

For a full list of awards and winners, please go to  
[www.noda.org.uk/regions/south\\_west](http://www.noda.org.uk/regions/south_west). ★



## Over 500 years of NODA long service at Yeovil

At the recent Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society AGM, District 8 Representative Trudy Dyke presented NODA long service awards to 13 members of the society. When added up, it was amazing to discover that over 500 years of NODA long service had been presented, and such an achievement does deserve special recognition.

The awards went to:

- ★ Russell Chatwin: 65 year pin
- ★ Roger Howell: 55 year pin
- ★ Ernie Thomas, Tricia Perry and Marian Stainer: 50 year gold bar
- ★ Sylvia Thresh: 45 year silver bar



- ★ Sally Carpenter and Geoff Thresh: 40 year silver bar
- ★ Sheila Driver: 35 year silver bar
- ★ Janet Bailey, Derek Bourne and Graham Carpenter: 30 year silver bar
- ★ Sally Matthews: 15 year badge

Courtesy of Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society

**NODA Today – June 2014**



*Nick Lawrence spotted completing successful  
workshop in Frome, courtesy of Jo Windel*

## Regional Councillor's workshop for directors

Much as South West Regional Councillor Nick Lawrence does try to keep out of the limelight, he was recently photographed completing a very successful directors' workshop, gracefully organised and hosted by Andrew Carpenter and the Frome Memorial Theatre.

Nick was able to pass on his time and knowledge to the enthusiastic group, which was greatly appreciated by all who attended. As you can see from the picture, a range of work was covered, including low breathing and the passing of tension, which the class seemed to enjoy! Do contact Nick at [nick.lawrence@noda.org.uk](mailto:nick.lawrence@noda.org.uk) for more information. ★



*The giant's head, courtesy  
of Alex Jackson*

## Honiton Pantomime Society gets imaginative

**Janet Elworthy (District 6 Representative) reports that  
you don't need a huge venue and a huge budget to  
generate some panto magic.**

Honiton Pantomime Society performs in a small village hall venue and society members construct homemade sets at weekends before shows. As a result, the society had to use all of its imagination and ingenuity to really set off its February 2014 production of *Jack and the Beanstalk*. As well as a bright, creative set with plenty of detail, the giant's head actually had a child hidden inside, standing behind the man's shoulders. At the appropriate moment the child jumped down and ran out through the auditorium as the head, with the headless giant chasing behind him. It looked brilliant and was completely unexpected!

To find out more information about the society or the show please have a look at [www.honitonpanto.co.uk](http://www.honitonpanto.co.uk), [www.twitter.com/honitonpanto](http://www.twitter.com/honitonpanto) and [www.facebook.com/honitonpanto](http://www.facebook.com/honitonpanto), where Alex Jackson is the main point of contact. ★



# regionalroundup Wales & Ireland

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## Councillor's Comments

What is the future for amateur theatre? At present the future looks bleak, as societies are slow to renew their NODA membership or are no longer continuing with their membership. In order for NODA to continue we must be strong numerically and I am asking you to encourage societies and individuals to join, or in some cases to rejoin.

Here in Wales and Ireland, we've recently had five new members join the region. This is certainly a step in the right direction. If each district could enlist a society each season it would go a long way to solving the problem.

We also welcome a new Regional Representative to District 7. Sharon Davies, from Newport, takes over from Martin Woodsford, who has stepped down for health reasons. We wish Martin a return

to good health and hope that Sharon has an enjoyable time with us.

My grateful thanks to the wide range of societies who have invited me to their productions, taking me to Newtown in mid-Wales, Abergavenny in East Wales and Carmarthen in West Wales, and I have also attended a workshop in North Wales and a whole round of shows in South Wales.

Unfortunately I had to postpone my visit to Ireland but I am hoping to make the trip in the coming months. Now I know what the pilgrims of old felt like!

Good luck with your productions.

Pob Hwyl,

**Brian Sullivan**  
Councillor, NODA Wales and Ireland

## Come and Join a Musical Theatre Workshop in District 3

Join us for an exciting day learning theatre skills at the NODA Performing Arts Youth Workshop on Sunday 6th July 2014, from 10am until 4pm. The event will take place at Blaenau Gwent Young Stars Rehearsal Headquarters, Domestic Science Block, Garfield Terrace, Ebbw Vale, Gwent, NP23 6HB.

The tutor for the workshop will be Luke Spencer. It is open to 45 young people aged 8 to 19 years old and costs £5 per person. You can book with your society's secretary.

For further information contact your NODA Wales & Ireland Regional Representative Dee McIlroy, by emailing her on [dee.mcilroy@noda.org.uk](mailto:dee.mcilroy@noda.org.uk), or calling her on 01873 855 311 or 07791 985 428.

## Welcome to NODA

Wales and Ireland welcome the following members to the region.

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**Gwynedd**  
**Ruthin Panto Society**  
District 1a  
**Aberystwyth Wardens Dramatic Society**

District 6  
**Fourth Aspect Productions**, Llanelli  
District 7  
**Musical Youth UK (Manchester)**, Newport

## The Savoy Theatre: The Oldest Theatre Site in Wales

The Savoy Theatre occupies the oldest theatre site in Wales, with the present building standing on the site of what was The Bell Inn, with a history spanning back to at least 1794. It is managed by the Monmouth Savoy Trust, which took over in 2010 when the theatre was threatened with closure. The Trust reintroduced regular live performances to the venue, and in conjunction with cinema showings, the aim is to make the Savoy an indispensable entertainment centre, serving the town and the wider Monmouthshire community. Back in 1998 Monmouth Operatic Society presented a tribute to Gilbert and Sullivan in this fine provincial theatre to celebrate its seventieth anniversary. ★



Concept Players' award-winning production of 'The 39 Steps'

## 20 Years: A Concept in the Making

It seems like hardly any time at all since Concept Players was founded, and yet we are now in our twentieth year. Concept Players was started by a handful of people who had been performing for years with various societies across South Wales and who wanted to branch out and do something more with theatre. Based solidly in the tradition of Gilbert and Sullivan, this new society aimed to challenge preconceptions of what amateur theatre is. It should be exciting and inventive; it should be of the highest quality, and above all it should be fun for its members and audiences alike.

What has followed has been a string of different productions in which we have endeavoured to always find new challenges for us and our audiences. Highlights have included *Ruddigore*, set as a children's story, rather frightening punk fairies in *Iolanthe* and a 1970s outing to *The Mikado* department store inspired by *Are You Being Served?*.

But the society has also branched out into other genres, having produced several plays. The pinnacle (so far anyway) was last year's *The 39 Steps*, which we took to the National Drama Festival Association's 40th All British Winners' Festival, where we swept the board, winning all the major trophies.

We have striven not to be bound by the conventions of a script or past professional productions, and often not by the bankability of shows either. Unfamiliar shows such as *Man of La Mancha*, *Sweeney Todd* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* have been very popular and have given our audiences something new and exciting.

There are plenty of challenges, as you would expect, but nothing stands between our commitment to our audiences and our desire to give them the very best night out.

**Rhairidh MacLoed Lyons**

## Insel Music and Dance Company

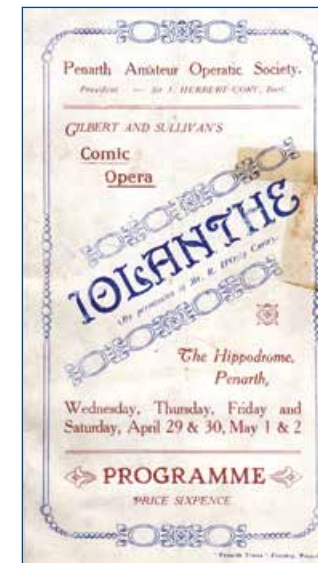
**Ekaterina Wright, who's now an accompanist and vocal coach for Llandudno Youth Music Theatre, tells us all about Russian youth amateur company Insel, a group she used to belong to.**

Insel Music and Dance Company is one of the few amateur youth theatres in Novosibirsk, Russia. Founded in 1998 by musician Yulia Bulgakova and choreographer Svetlana Ignatieva, with support from the Centre of German Language and Culture (Vorteil), the theatre became a fresh creative platform for young people aged 10 to 23 years of age. Its main aim was to nurture an individual approach to each of its members in order to develop their full creative potential.

The company usually performs four or five

premiers and between 20 and 30 concerts every year. Each season differs from another and each production creates new tasks for the members, from writing scripts to creating costumes and sets. Alongside rehearsals for productions, all crew also attend vocal and drama master classes, as well as ballet and dance classes based on their current performance. During all of this time, Insel has had great support from the Vorteil Centre, and thirty percent of any given production will have a connection to Germany through folk songs, dance, music or poems.

I was lucky enough to be amongst the first members of the theatre and I am grateful for the chance I have been given to express myself, for the opportunity to work alongside professionals and for the wonderful friends I have made. ★



PODS's first ever programme for 'Iolanthe', courtesy of Kitty Cartwright

## Ninety years of success for PODS

Penarth Operatic and Dramatic Society, known locally as PODS, is this year celebrating its ninetieth birthday. The society came into being in 1924, and within three weeks of being established performed its first musical production of *Iolanthe*. What a glittering opening evening it must have been, with the audience in evening dress and the reviews shouting about the "gorgeous scenes of brilliancy".

With over ninety years of productions to choose from it's difficult to pick the highlights, for there have been many. In thinking of our late NODA district rep Frank Wooles, an ex-member but a long-time friend of PODS, I have to mention *The King and I*. Put on in 1963 and produced by Frank, this show won the premier prize at the Waterford International Festival and Frank also won the award for best producer.

Jumping on a few decades, when Frank came to see our 2011 production of *Cabaret*, he said it was "the best show PODS has ever put on". *Cabaret* was a challenge, a show out of our comfort zone, but it won two NODA district awards. However, it's not just plays and musicals that PODS performs. In 1996 we decided to tackle pantomime, and we have found this theatre genre to be extremely gratifying; it provides us with a junior section, and it gives both the children on stage and in the audience a taste of theatre, as well as being financially advantageous.

PODS is a very busy company that puts on four shows a year, and we began this very special ninetieth anniversary in March with Arthur Miller's emotional drama *A View From the Bridge*. Our May musical this year was the risqué fantasy *The Witches of Eastwick*, which is very different from our very first light-hearted musical *Iolanthe*! ★

**Mary Gardner**  
Chair, Penarth Operatic and Dramatic Society



# Tackling the hazards of a First World War production

**From our worst winter storms on record to our best ever Winter Olympic Games, 2014 is already gearing up to be a pretty eventful year. For many of us, however, it will be remembered as the centenary of the First World War. With this in mind, many arts and funding bodies are ensuring that money is made available for local groups, including amateur theatre groups, to mark this historic occasion.**

If your society is putting on a First World War themed performance, it is likely that you will need to take on extra props. These may include edged weapons, like bayonets, or replica guns and firearms. To immerse people in what it may have been like to be in the trenches, your society may also choose to use smoke, fog or pyrotechnics.

Staging a production of this nature may mean that your society is moving away from what it is used to. With this in mind, we thought we would take this time to explain many of the insurance and health and safety considerations that your cast and crew should be aware of when entering a production like this.

## Property

Many societies will not have the necessary props at hand for a First World War performance. It means you will probably have to hire some in. If you do, it is more than likely that the hire company will make you responsible for insurance should anything be damaged. Check the terms and conditions before you hire the props. Should something go wrong and a claim is submitted, having this information to hand will mean you are both on the same page.

If you are made responsible for insuring the props, check whether your sums insured will cover your current property, along with any hired equipment. You may be required to increase the insured value for the period of your hire.

## Edged weapons and replica guns

If your production is based around the lives of service men in the trenches, for example, it would be hard to have an authentic performance without replica weapons and guns. It is important, however, that your society takes several precautionary steps.

Firstly, it's a criminal offence to have any edged weapons or guns on display in public. We **strongly** recommend that if it is deemed necessary to use such props that you speak with your local police constabulary. They will note the time and location of the performances. Then, should a member of the public call advising that there is a man dressed as a First World War soldier wielding a bayonet, they will know exactly who you are and why you are doing it. The police may advise of certain conditions to their agreement and it is best to get this in writing. As with hiring props, should you have an unfortunate situation, you will both know what was agreed. If your performance is outdoors, the police may also look for reassurance that members of the public cannot get easy access to the props.

You will need to appoint an armourer – someone who will be responsible for the weapons, who counts them out and counts them back in. If they fire, then you need to consider the type of blank ammunition that is used, as some of it can be extremely loud. How far away are your audience? Do the cast need

to use some form of ear protection? The hire company will be able to advise you.

There are a couple of additional things that you need to think about when using these items. One is to ensure that you have completed a risk assessment that specifically relates to firearms. Here you should outline exactly how the weapon will be used, who can be harmed and how, and what methods of control you will put in place to ensure the public are safe. Another good tip is to use them at rehearsal, and not just at the dress rehearsal. If possible you should try and use any firearms during the main rehearsal period so that your cast are comfortable around them. Good practice would say that if you have any fight sequences within a show, then you should rehearse these before every performance. Practice not only makes perfect but it also helps to ensure people's safety too.



We recommend having the cast and crew trained in dealing with these weapons. Although they may be replicas, they could still cause injury.

## Smoke, fog and pyrotechnics

Creating the atmosphere of what many may have experienced in the trenches will no doubt add to the authenticity of the production. However, it brings with it many new health and safety considerations.

As soon as you add smoke or fog into the equation, you run the risk of obscuring potential trip and fall hazards. For anyone involved or attending the production, this may be a problem.

Depending on the location of your performance, whether it's indoors or outdoors, it may also have an effect on how much smoke or fog you use. Indoors, you can try and forecast the path it may take and try to minimise the impact on the audience. However, if your performance is outdoors, you are open to all the elements. So it's worth considering whether large patches of smoke or fog could obscure walkways, paths or even cause a hazard on nearby roads.

Where possible we would recommend that thoroughfares for members of the public are kept free from obstruction and visibility is not obscured. For your cast and crew it would be beneficial to highlight potential hazards as and when you see them during rehearsals. That way, should something go wrong on the night and the cast can't see a hazard, they should be aware of it. A safety induction for all crew and cast is a must; a handy pro forma for this can be found on the NODASafe page of the NODA website.

Above all, before you use either of these effects, ensure a detailed risk assessment has been carried out and documented. If you are in any doubt about how to carry these out, we recommend you speak with NODASafe.

Finally, pyrotechnics require some specialist training. We would urge anyone who plans to use these in any performances to seek professional advice before purchasing them. Below are some simple, but not exhaustive, tips for the use of pyrotechnics in productions.

- ★ Make sure that the use of pyrotechnics is detailed in the show risk assessments.
- ★ Designate a person to be in charge of loading the pyro pods.

- ★ Make sure that your pyro plan is detailed and that you have a clear understanding of which pods are firing, when they are firing and who is on stage at the time.
- ★ Absolute security over the keys to the detonator firing unit is a must. If your designated person is on lunch, the keys to the detonator box are with them.
- ★ Ensure that all the cast, crew, band, director, choreographer etc are briefed about what is going to happen.
- ★ Practice with the cast on stage outside of a rehearsal run.
- ★ Ensure that the cast know where they must stand. **If they are not standing in the right place, do not fire.**
- ★ Only fire when you have a clear line of sight. Make sure that your detonator box is situated where you can see every part of the stage and each of the pods. **No clear line of sight? Then do not fire.**

We're not saying that you shouldn't use any of these effects; far from it. But if you do, we advise that you conduct an in-depth risk assessment, follow the advice above and seek professional advice where necessary.

## Public liability

In addition to the special effects and replica weapons, there are several hazards which members of the public could be exposed to during these kinds of performances. As part of your risk assessment we would recommend that you review your levels of public liability. Like many parts of your insurance, it is possible to increase this element of your cover for the duration of the show.

## Risk assessments

The one thing that should always be done before any production is a risk assessment. It isn't simply ticking boxes to comply with protocol; it's ensuring the safety and wellbeing of your cast, crew and members of the public.

Depending on the production, it may be advisable to amend and update your risk assessment. If you look at the NODASafe page on the NODA website, you will find not only risk assessment templates for theatre, but a handy production checklist. This listing will prompt you to carry out both the production risk assessment and (most importantly) checks prior to each performance. By carrying out some simple checks and noting your answers, as well as putting in any safety controls necessary, you can go a long way to making sure that

everyone stays safe. It's all about better planning and safer productions.

If you're not used to carrying out such assessments, it may be worth one of the members attending a NODASafe workshop. Keep an eye out for details of training and other safety tips and advice. If you have questions about how to minimise risk in your performance, we recommend you speak with your broker.

**Matthew Pyke and Neil Maidman**

## Author profiles

Matthew is Managing Director of Lloyd & Whyte, who provide services to members as NODA Insurance.

Neil Maidman is Senior Safety Consultant of Health & Safety Mentor, who provide services to members as NODASafe.

If you have any questions in relation to this article, you can contact NODA Insurance on **0845 130 1368** or find more information at **www.nodainsurance.co.uk**. To get in touch with NODASafe go to **www.noda.org.uk/nodasafemembers** or call **0845 257 6632**.

Calls may be recorded for use in quality management, training and customer support. ★

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# regionalroundup West Midlands

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## Councillor's Comments

The eighth West Midlands Regional Conference and AGM was held in Sutton Coldfield Town Hall on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

The event commenced with a workshop on 'The Power of Posture', presented by actor turned life coach Rob Holcraft, followed by the AGM. After a light supper the regional awards were presented by National President Bert Lumsden. At the end of the evening, Anne Lumsden was presented with a bouquet of flowers and Bert with a salver to record their visit.

The West Midlands also celebrates the service that two of its members have given to NODA and amateur theatre. John Richards, who was Regional Representative, Regional Councillor and President of NODA, and John Slim, a man of words who wrote about amateur theatre in the local press and for some time edited the NODA magazine. Both will be missed but their legacy will long be remembered and appreciated. ★

**Michael Hastilow**  
Councillor, NODA West Midlands



Anne and Bert  
Lumsden with  
Michael Hastilow

## Capturing Generation Y

**Robin Cooper of Telford and District Light Operatic Players explains how to attract a younger audience.**

If you were born between 1977 and 1994 you are officially from Generation Y. People in Generation Y are known as incredibly sophisticated about technology and immune to traditional marketing and sales pitches, as they have been exposed to it all since early childhood. So how do you engage them with a stage musical of *The Wizard of Oz*, written in 1939?

Simple, give Generation Y something sophisticated that they can relate to. Start with technology and use computer animated graphics to create magical tornados, a scarecrow that sets on fire, a large

speaking wizard's head, flying monkeys and a witch that melts in front of them. If this isn't yet a computer game then it should be.

You do need expert advice when it comes to technology, so thank goodness there was a local company in Telford which was willing to experiment and work with TADLOP on creating ideas and bringing them to reality. A huge range of new technologies was used, including green screen filming, which is now available and affordable for amateur groups to use.



*The Wizard of Oz* was performed by Telford and District Light Operatic Players in October 2013. Pictures can be found in the archives at [www.tadlop.com](http://www.tadlop.com). ★

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# A Grand Finale: Newcastle Players

Bowing out with  
'Boeing Boeing'

**After nearly eighty years, North Staffordshire's Newcastle Players has bowed out and rung down its final curtain with a production of *Boeing Boeing* by Marc Camoletti, with a full house on the last night and almost capacity performances throughout the run.**

The society was founded in 1934 by John Rowley, whose daughter Elizabeth was the society's last president. Within the Potteries area the society was one of the longest running amateur theatre groups, performing over 150 plays and 50 short productions during its lifetime. It was renowned for excellent sets, costumes and front-of-house efficiency. All of this was of course complemented by a high standard of acting in dramas, comedies and murder mysteries.

So you may ask, what were the reasons for closure? In general, falling ticket sales are a problem experienced by many societies. However, for Newcastle Players the biggest issue was the temporary closure for refurbishment of their regular venue the Mitchell Memorial Theatre, which resulted in the society only being able to perform one play a year. This, combined with the cost of maintaining the historic building, which the society owns, has been a major drain on their resources. The building is Grade II listed and was bought by Newcastle Players in 1969, but both the building and its contents will now have to be sold.

If other societies in the area need flats or various associated equipment they can contact either John Hough (01782 614360) or Moira Hammond (01782 627551 or 07788 402195).

At some time in the future the society will also be selling a wide range of props, but for the time being



they have some play-specific props on sale for societies who are about to perform *Steel Magnolias*, *Funny Money*, *A Party to Murder* or 'Allo 'Allo.

The Potteries area is rich in both amateur theatre societies and talented actors. Unfortunately, not enough of these actors were permanent members of the society and they often took parts with other groups. As a result, this made it difficult for all of the groups in the area to cast productions and the Players found that membership fell below a viable level to operate, especially on the administrative side.

With their demise, the society's plea to the younger generation is to take an active role in their societies; don't just act, but be on the committee or create sets, and provide support to the society by bringing in a solid group of consistent supporters.

Despite these troubles, Newcastle Players has gone out on a high with the hilarious farce *Boeing*

*Boeing*, and thank the tremendous cast for their efforts, directed by Tim Churchill, assisted by Ann McArdle and featuring Kirsty Challinor, Debbie Cornock, Jonathan Fernyhough, James Lawton, Janet Mulliner and Cathy O'Reilly.

The story of the Newcastle Players can be found in two books written by long-term member Geoff Price: *Founded 1934: The Story of the Newcastle Players* and *A Word on Plays*. He has also written *150 Years of a Hartshill Institution*, which details the history of the Grade II listed building which the Newcastle Players own. All books cost £7.50 and further details of how to buy them can be found at [www.newcastleplayers.co.uk/books](http://www.newcastleplayers.co.uk/books).

Grateful thanks go to all who have supported Newcastle Players throughout the years. ★

**Moira Hammond**  
Secretary, Newcastle Players

## Celebrating Peggy Cox

**Peggy Cox has decided to retire from Chaddesley Amateur Theatrical Society's (CATS) committee after 28 years of dedicated service, but she will remain the society's President.**

Her interest in the dramatic arts has spanned nearly 70 years and rarely do you find someone with such staying power, still attending two evening rehearsals per week and remaining an active and influential member of the society.

She joined Tube Investments Concert Party in 1944 and entertained disabled military personnel in hospitals. She also joined the Joan Reynolds Dramatic Society and the Forward Operatic Society as a dancer. On Peggy's return from Australia after five years, she joined

Chaddesley Corbett WI and her interest in all things dramatic really took off. In 1969 she took her drama producers' examination, and in the same year she produced *Isolation at Eyam* with members of CCWI and won the novice class of county drama at Malvern Festival Theatre.

However, it was her 1975 production of *Oliver* which proved to be a turning point in her career, as after this she was invited to produce 10 shows for Gilt Edge Amateur Dramatic Society in Kidderminster. Meanwhile, she continued to take an active role in other theatrical events in Chaddesley, resulting in Peggy being involved in several productions each year.

CATS was formed in 1985 and Peggy was one of the founding committee members, with active

involvement in over 50 very successful productions. Peggy has solo produced, co-produced, made full sets of costumes and been wardrobe mistress for many shows, and has always been a respected advisor and critical friend. It's not just that she encourages performers; it's also that her skills and experience in production help to find and develop talents hidden in all age groups, and help to raise the expectations and achievements of us all.

On behalf of CATS and all the audiences who have enjoyed the shows we congratulate and thank her. ★





# Take the gamble out of protecting your society

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