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Autumn 2013

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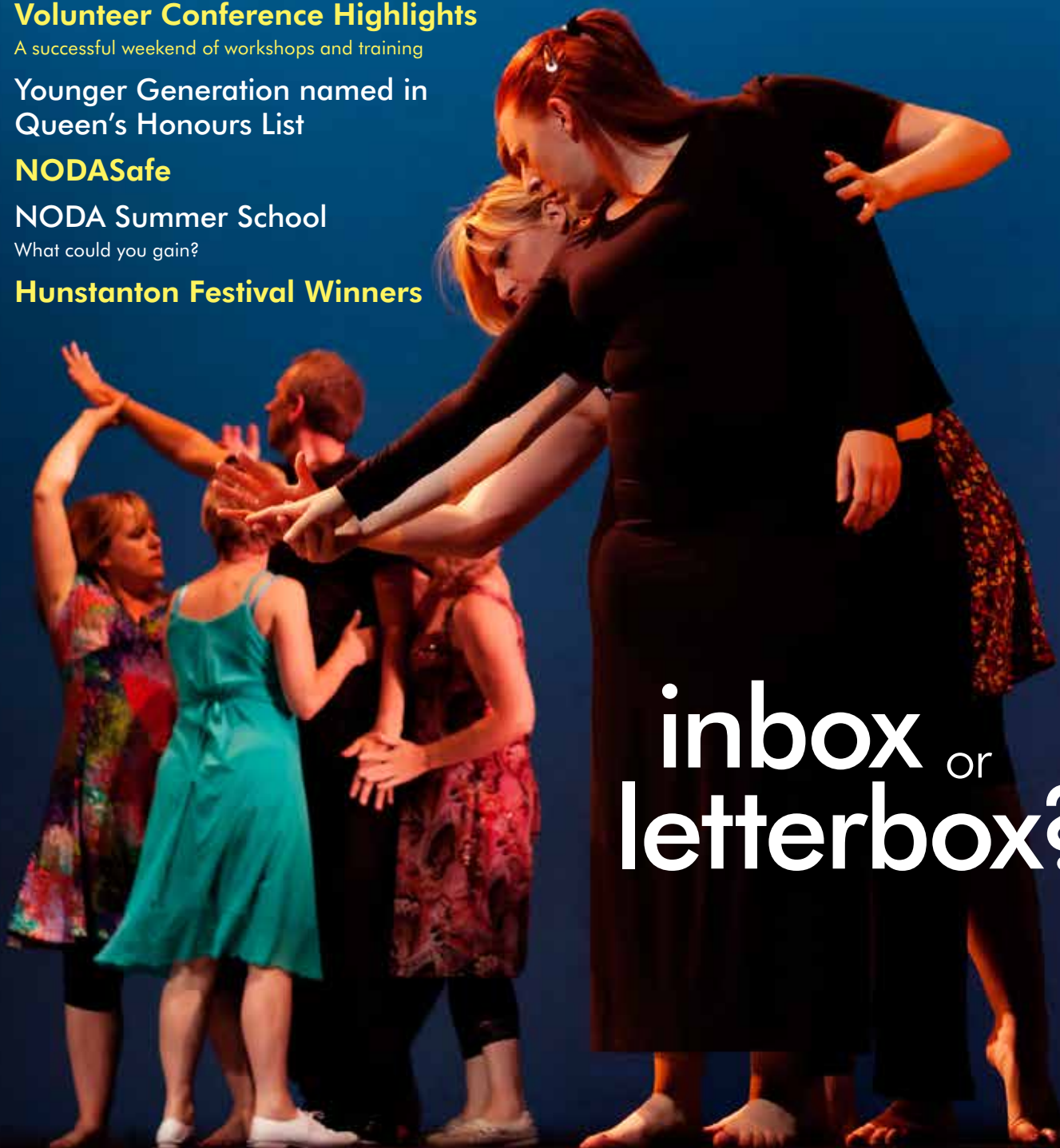
Younger Generation named in Queen's Honours List

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National Operatic and Dramatic Association

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

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www.nodainsurance.co.uk
0845 130 1368

NODASafe: www.noda.org.uk/
nodasafemembers
0845 257 6632
NODASAFE@noda.org.uk
@NODASAFE

NODA Legal Helpline:
01733 374 790
(NODA Membership Services)
info@noda.org.uk

NODA Box Office:
www.nodaboxoffice.co.uk/
01491 825 984
noda@centralboxoffice.co.uk

NODA Social Media Helpdesk:
www.noda.org.uk/socialmedia
01379 882 188
socialmedia@noda.org.uk

Social Media
f facebook.com/NationalOperaticDramaticAssociation
t @NODAtweets
p pinterest.com/nodatheatre/
y youtube.com/OfficialNODA

Design and Production

warwickprint

The University of Warwick
Westwood Campus
Avon Road
Coventry
CV4 8GL
Tel: 024 765 24729
Fax: 024 765 24566
enquiries@warwickprint.co.uk

08/13



How to share information from NODA more easily with all members of your Society

These days, it is harder than ever before to keep up with the amount of information you either need to know about - or would like to know about - that affects your hobby. The old days of passing around a dog-eared and well thumbed magazine until you find out about an event that has already taken place, or an out-of-date special offer, are long gone.

Thanks to new technology, it is now easier than ever before to stay up to date and help your friends keep up to date with information from NODA. For example, when thinking about future NODA magazines and other publications, a digital or online copy can be instantly shared free of charge with everyone in your Society.

NODA is now embracing the new technology that will provide you with the options to receive information in a format of your choice. In planning ahead into 2014 and beyond, we would like to know how you would prefer to receive information from NODA; in other words, what is your preferred format?

To your inbox or through your letterbox?

NODA is planning how to follow-up this pilot edition of NODA TODAY with a regular magazine throughout 2014 which will be available to you in a variety of formats. We would therefore like you to let us know how you would like to receive any future magazine from us. You can tell us by either completing and returning the enclosed postcard, or you can complete the short form on the NODA website **www.noda.org.uk**

There are lots of options - if you would prefer to download and share a magazine as a PDF or e-book with other members of your Society, you will be able to read and download it from the website, or have it delivered direct to your ipad (Android and Kindle versions are also being planned), or you will be able to receive a magazine in print. The choice is yours!

Let us know by Friday 25th October 2013 how you would prefer to receive a NODA magazine, and this will help us plan how best to send information to you in the year ahead. NB you can also tell us how you would prefer to receive other publications such as the Annual Review.

We're constantly trying to improve services to members and so if you have any views on publications or ideas for other new services, please contact us by email on **admin@noda.org.uk** or at the usual Peterborough address. ★

Tony Gibbs
Chief Executive
tony@noda.org.uk

contactus NODA Head Office Staff

Dale Freeman
Licensing Manager & Membership Services
dale@noda.org.uk
Membership services, child protection and licensing enquiries

Antonia Gray
Membership Services
antonia@noda.org.uk
CRB advice, script and score orders, long service awards and summer school enquiries

Beverly Clarke
Finance & Membership Services
beverly@noda.org.uk
Membership/society enquiries renewals and queries

Sue Cuthbert
Finance Manager
sue@noda.org.uk
Payroll, monthly and year-end accounts, supplier payments, bank, HMRC, auditors and Charity Commission

Bronwen Stanway
Executive PA
bronwen@noda.org.uk
PA to CEO, support to NODA Trustees and the NODA Ltd board, staff HR, liaison for NODA with NDFA

Susannah Herzog
Media & Communications Assistant
susannah@noda.org.uk
Publications, website and social media

Oliver Perkins-Gibbons
Project Assistant
oliver@noda.org.uk
Project Assistant

did you noda?



NODA's new small, portable and pocket-sized membership benefit z-fold leaflet will soon be available. It features an A to Z of all the benefits NODA offers to members, along with all the NODA contact details you need to know and lots of other useful information.

The annual AGM is being held in Peebles, Scotland, from Friday 27th to Sunday 29th September, 2013. This is open to all NODA members and is a great chance to meet people, catch up with old friends and discuss both NODA policies and the challenges facing amateur theatre. We're looking forward to seeing you all there.

NODA has a trading company called NODA Limited which helps generate funds for the Association. A new voluntary Chairman is currently being sought for NODA Ltd, and if this is something you are interested in you can find more information on the NODA website: www.noda.org.uk/news/would_you_like_to_join_noda_on_a_voluntary_basis. You might also be interested to know that the voluntary role of Honorary Accountant for the Association is also currently open. Details of this position can also be found on the NODA website and full details of both positions are available on www.do-it.org.uk, a national database of voluntary positions.

NODA is undertaking a pilot marketing project with the following societies who are putting on *The Slipper and the Rose* this autumn: Birkenhead Operatic Society Trust (BOST) and the Willow Tree Theatre Company. As licence holder for *Slipper*, NODA is supporting societies who are performing the show by helping them create marketing and publicity techniques to develop audiences and sell tickets. If successful, we hope to roll this out with other societies who decide to take on *Slipper*, so watch out for more information from us about this.

Since entering the world of social media in 2012, NODA now has over 3,300 followers on Twitter and over 800 likes on Facebook. We also help our members to interact with social media through our Social Media Helpdesk, available from the Members' Area of the website. We've got handy guides on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, as well as newly added ones on Pinterest and Flickr.



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regionalroundup

East

East Committee

Councillor

Don McKay

01480 219181

don.mckay@noda.org.uk

Membership Secretary

Catherine Dixey

01449 676878

catherine.dixey@noda.org.uk

Web Manager

June Forway

01480 300409

june.forway@noda.org.uk

Awards Secretary

Jane Farr

01553 772038

jane.farr@noda.org.uk

Magazine Editor

Julia Rymer

07786 620623

julia.rymer@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor

Zelda Rolfe

01603 408017

zelda.rolfe@noda.org.uk

Assistant Youth Advisor

David Street

07770 544843

david.street@noda.org.uk

Minutes Secretary

Lavinia Pirret

01362 851927

lavinia.pirret@noda.org.uk

East Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1

Bella Coleman

07540 063946

isobella1@ntlworld.com

DISTRICT 2

Enid Cooper

01234 708432

enid.cooper@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 3

Nova Horley

01582 604344

nova.horley@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 4 N

Stephen P E Hayter

PE30 3BP

01553 671932

stephen.hayter@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 4 S

Julie Petrucci

01223 880023

julie.petrucci@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 5

Susan Dupont

01603 416638

susan.dupont@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 6

Terry Rymer

07786 620622

terry.rymer@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 7

Susan Hartwell

01371 872657

susan.hartwell@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 8

Stewart Adkins

01621 891143

stewart.adkins@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 9

Vicki Avery

01992 441441

vicki.avery@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 10

Tessa Davies

Tel 01702 525112

tessa.davies@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 11

Ann Platten

01787 374069

anne.platten@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 12

Pamela White

01449 721467

pamela.white@noda.org.uk

Councillor's Comments

As you will know by now, Jim Farr resigned as NODA East Councillor after receiving a terminal diagnosis and has subsequently passed on. Jim's wish was that we carry on with the business of the day and elect a new Councillor as soon as possible. With this in mind we have done so, and I can announce officially that I am your new Councillor for the NODA East region.

I have been involved with amateur theatre for many years now in all aspects, from front of house, backstage, set design and build, lighting, sound, on stage, directing, and as a member and chairman



of several society committees. I have served as a Regional Representative for District 1 for the last two years and have stage managed and presented the new style NODA East Gala Awards luncheon.

I am passionate about amateur theatre and its future, and I believe that NODA provides the help, advice and guidance to enable it to flourish. So it is with great pleasure that I accept the role of Councillor and look forward to carrying on the great work that Jim Farr had started, and the exciting new strategies that NODA have planned for the very near future. Whilst doing this I can rely on support from my wife Maxine. Our wedding in Greta Green in May of this year was a wonderful day, and I look forward to taking on the role of Councillor with her backing.

Don McKay

Councillor, NODA East

This year's winners at the Hunstanton Festival

This year the Hunstanton Festival of One-Act Plays was held at the Princess Theatre from 11th to 14th July. The Festival gives adult and youth amateur groups the chance to showcase either a one-act play, an excerpt from a longer play or a play containing musical numbers. The Festival is run by the Hunstanton and District Festival of Arts, which has for many years supported the arts in the local area and in particular, aims to work with young people.

Listed below are the award winners for the 2013 Hunstanton Festival.

Best Adult Production: The Stagecoach Cup
Winner: *Weed*, written and directed by Alan Huckle (Four by Four)

Best Youth Production: Williamson Cup
Winner: *Three Nil Down at Half Time*, directed by Andy Prior (Watlington Young Players)

Best Adult Actress: Hathaway Cup
Winner: Roz Morgan as 'Emily' in *Last Train to King's Lynn*

Best Youth Actress: Ann Munzer Cup
Winner: Eve Bodenham in *An Excellent Adventure for the Fabulous Four* (JGDATA)

Best Adult Actor: The Mudie Cup
Winner: Liam Baker as 'Paul' in *Beyond the Door* (Imagine Theatre Company)

Best Youth Actor: The Newby Cup
Winner: Sam Lord as 'the Manager' in *Three Nil Down at Half Time* (Watlington Young Players)

Best Original Script: NODA Cup
Winner: Steve Harper, *Last Train to King's Lynn* (GADS)

Technical Award: Judith Cup
Winner: Wilburton Theatre Group for set, costumes and music in *Night of the Dolls*

Supporting Actor/Actress: Princess Theatre Cup
Winner: Lorna Hutchinson as 'George' in *His Favourite Wife* (Princess Theatre Club)

Adjudicator's Award: Shakespeare Cup
Winner: John Giller Drama and Theatre Academy, for the variety and number of small significant performances and general teamwork in both *The Pirates' Picnic* and *An Excellent Adventure for the Fabulous Four*

Sad death of leading light in King's Lynn theatre

The sudden death of a leading light in amateur theatre – within weeks of a cancer diagnosis – has caused widespread shock and sadness.

Jim Farr, 59, had devoted more than 40 years to theatre groups in West Norfolk and beyond, with wide-ranging roles both on and off the stage.



Jim with his granddaughter Freya

When he received his diagnosis he was still working in the job he had held with Norfolk highways authority for 25 years and in post as National Operatic and Dramatic Association (NODA) trustee for the east of England.

Mr Farr, of Jermyn Road, Gaywood, leaves wife Jane, 56, son Simon, 28, daughter Laura, 27, and granddaughter Freya, 21 months.

Mrs Farr said stepping down from his role at NODA was one of the most difficult things her husband had to do after they got the news he had pancreatic cancer and it could not be treated. The couple had been married 35 years.

Mrs Farr said: "I've always said I'd happily do it all again as long as it was with Jim. He was always there for everybody and was someone, I think, for everybody to look up to."

Mrs Farr said her husband faced his diagnosis with positivity and a sense of humour - though no-one realised how quickly the disease would overwhelm him.

Mr Farr was a life member of Lynn

Players and previously served as Chairman for 14 years. He also had a long association with King's Lynn Operatic and Dramatic Society.

Tony Gibbs, Chief Executive of NODA, said: "Jim was so widely respected and regarded by all of us within NODA – staff and volunteers as well.

"Jim always contributed an enormous amount both in helping to develop the service and supporting members.

"He was someone who was regarded as an innovator, who was keen to try out new ideas. He coupled all of that with constant professionalism and good humour that ensured he was a very popular man as well. He will be greatly missed."

Sharon Fox, who was Vice Chairman of Lynn Players when Mr Farr was at the helm, said he was "inspirational."

Mr Farr's funeral was held at Mintlyn Crematorium on 8th July and donations were given to the British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research UK.

Article courtesy of the Lynn News



Jim (left) as 'the Butler' in the *Importance of Being Earnest* (King's Lynn Players)



regionalroundup

East Midlands

News Round Up with Regional Editor Alex Wood

Peter Gadd (1925 – 2013)

Peter Gadd was better known as Arnold Peters, who played 'Jack Wolley' in *The Archers*. For most of his life Peter lived in Wellingborough where he enjoyed a long and active involvement with amateur theatre. He was an accomplished actor, singer and musician who brought a professional polish to the shows he was in. I knew him best as a director, where he brought his extensive experience as a performer to the shows he was involved with. He was very exacting, taking a personal interest in all aspects of productions. He loved comedy and was very skilled at encouraging actors to make the very most of any script they were doing.

He will be sadly missed.

The Lion Theatre, Horncastle

In the last edition of NODA news we included an interesting article about The Lion Theatre. At a time when a lot of groups are finding trouble getting a venue I thought the story of a group building their own theatre in a pub's back yard was interesting and inspiring. How ironic then that I heard recently that, because of a change of pub ownership, the theatre is now under threat.

By the time you read this, important decisions about the theatre's future will most probably have been taken. Whatever the outcome we wish the Lion Theatre Company the very best for the future.

Spotlight magazine

Northamptonshire now has its own magazine for those involved in amateur theatre. *Spotlight* will be published every six months and will include information and advertisements about forthcoming shows, articles about performers in amateur and professional theatre, and other articles of interest. It is a very useful source for anyone involved in amateur theatre and you can look at it online at http://www.spotlightmag.co.uk/magspdf/Spotlight_June_13.pdf

Your News Please

If you think you have a story that might interest our readers please drop me a message. By all means write it yourself, as I can make adjustments if necessary, with your approval. I'd also be happy to have a chat or send you a short questionnaire to order your thoughts. You can contact me on 01604 862 634 or at alex.wood@noda.org.uk

East Midlands Committee

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

East Midlands Districts & Representatives

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

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

DISTRICT 3
Phil Williams
0115 919 8545
phil.williams@noda.org.uk

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

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

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

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

DISTRICT 8
Jenny Chandler
01604 233709

NODA East Midlands Regional Awards

Long Service Awards presented January to June 2013

40 years
Hinckley Concordia AOS:
William Hare

45 years
Oundle Gilbert & Sullivan Players:
Andrew Spurrell
Ripley and Alfreton MTC:
Joyce Handbury
Hinckley Concordia AOS:
Terry Jukes and Terry Turner
Nottingham OS: Trevor Impey

50 years
Newark AOS:
Rita Crowe and Russell Crowe

55 years
Rose Hill Musical Society:
Peter Featherstone

60 years
Long Eaton OS: Wyn Hinks

65 years
Rose Hill Musical Society:
Colin Ashton
Northampton MTC:
Cliff Billing and Bryan Hall

The full listings of 10 to 35 year awards and youth awards can be found on the NODA website.



One hundred and fifteen years of history: the story of Northampton Musical Theatre Company

From *Annie Get Your Gun* to *Waltzes From Vienna*, there isn't much the Northampton Musical Theatre Company hasn't performed over the last one hundred and fifteen years.

The company is amongst the oldest amateur dramatic institutions in the country and was founded as the Northampton Amateur Operatic Company in 1898 by the choir of Northampton's Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Their first production was at the Opera House in The Royal Theatre Northampton (nowadays part of the Royal and Derngate Theatre) in June 1898, where the company presented Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Yeoman Of The Guard*, followed by *The Mikado* the next year. Although the company experienced some trouble over the next few years when some members split off to form the Guildhall Operatic Company, in 1904 they were reunited as Northampton Amateur Operatic Company (NAOC) for a repeat performance of *The Mikado*.

All productions took place at the Royal Theatre until 1922 when the venue changed and a production of *Les Cloche de Corneville* was given at The New Theatre, on Abington Street. The company put on shows at The New Theatre for many years, including

Desert Song, earning the company the accolade of being the first amateur group in the country to present it.

The only breaks in the company's long line of annual shows were forced during the war years. However, they came back with a flourish in 1947 with a production of *Rose Marie*, for which they had to recruit an almost entirely new company. That year's programme notes that the company had donated over £3,500 to charity by that point – around £35,000 in today's money.

The post war years saw many successful productions at The New Theatre, including many Ivor Novello shows. Unfortunately, in 1958 The New Theatre was razed to the ground. The company relocated to the Cannon Cinema's Savoy in Abington Square in 1959. This was meant to be a temporary home for the company but they stayed for 23 years, by which time the venue was known as the ABC Cinema; it still stands today as the Deco Theatre. That year saw the completion of new theatre Derngate, where the company took up annual residency until *Anything Goes* in 2009. In 2010, NAOC moved to the Cripps Hall Theatre, situated on the campus of the Northampton School for Boys.

Over the years, NAOC has been nominated

in several categories for the annual NODA Awards. Their best year was 2010 for the production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, for which they were presented with trophies for Best Programme, Best Poster, Best Show for Northamptonshire, and the icing on the cake, Best Show for the whole of the East Midlands.

In 2011 the company presented *Sweet Charity*, their last show as NAOC. The Northampton Musical Theatre Company, as they are now known, decided that despite their affectionate nickname 'The Amateurs' the full title no longer described who they were. Their first production as NMTC was Northamptonshire's amateur premier of Lord Andrew Lloyd Webbers' *Whistle Down the Wind*. Webber's Really Useful Group said that they were "still talking about" NMTC's production of the show and that it had "really sparkled."

This year NMTC are returning to family favourite *Oklahoma!* in the Cripps Hall Theatre in the October 2013 half-term week. Tickets are available now from the Box Office on 01604 258 666.

See www.nmtc.me.uk for awards, programmes and galleries. The society is also looking for programmes from before the 1930s. If you are able to help, please contact them on info@nmtc.me.uk.



regionalroundup London

London Committee

Councillor

Jacquie Stedman

020 8529 3318

jacquie.stedman@noda.org.uk

Regional Secretary

Cortina Henderson

020 7407 4245

cortina.henderson@noda.org.uk

Treasurer

Philip Orton

01923 670267

philip.orton@noda.org.uk

Membership Secretary

Barrie Theobald

01189 267135

barrie.theobald@noda.org.uk

Membership Team

Frances Chalkwright

020 8926 7413

frances.chalkwright@noda.org.uk

Tony Sweeney

020 8654 0682

anthony.sweeney@noda.org.uk

Awards Secretary

Josie Shingles

020 8953 6560

josie.shingles@noda.org.uk

Website Team

Jackie Mitchell

07852 928287

jackie.mitchell@noda.org.uk

Cortina Henderson

020 7407 4245

cortina.henderson@noda.org.uk

Magazine Editor

Rosemary Roberts

01628 636984

rosemary.roberts@noda.org.uk

Grand Opera Advisor

Bryan Kesselman

020 8868 8921

bryan.kesselman@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor

Ann Hertler-Smith

01923 267604

ann.hertler-smith@noda.org.uk

Conference Co-ordinator

Bob Borrow

020 8529 6377

bob.borrow@noda.org.uk

Conference Technical

Co-ordinator

Sam Webb

07899 992772

sam.webb@noda.org.uk



Councillor's Comments

Welcome to this edition of the NODA Magazine. I am pleased that we now have another line of communication again with our members.

It was lovely to see so many of you at our London Conference on 7th July. We had a super day, albeit rather hot, and Andy Murray even won the tennis. A Regional Conference is a wonderful opportunity to meet each other in a social arena, swap ideas, network and celebrate our achievements, and I have a CD of photographs of the day to remember it by. I am sure a lot of happy people left the theatre justifiably proud of what they had achieved over the past year.

In an effort to help our groups provide another string to their marketing bow, we have set up a NODA London Twitter account @NODALondon. If you follow us and tweet about your next show we will then retweet it, thus taking your message to many more groups than would otherwise have seen it.

Jacquie Stedman

Councillor, NODA London

London Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1

Tony Sweeney

020 8654 0682

anthony.sweeney@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2

Zena Wigram

01895 636028

zena.wigram@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 3

Stephen Macvicar

07767 822385

stephen.macvicar@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 4

Darren Knight

07891 326568

darren.knight@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 5

Please refer to

Councillor

DISTRICT 6

Jackie Mitchell

07852 928287

jackie.mitchell@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 7

Paul M Holgate

020 8804 9553

paul.holgate@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 8

Tony Austin

01895 634288

tony.austin@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 9

Harvey Kesselman

020 8621 3192

harvey.kesselman@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 10

Jill Haistead

07939 332542

jill.haistead@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 11

Maggy Collins

01296 331588

maggy.collins@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 11a

Rita Carpenter

01494 520723

rita.carpenter@noda.org.uk

(Assistant) John

Draper

01753 888666

john.draper@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 12

Gareth Jeremy

01295 266404

gareth.jeremy@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 13

Henry Hawes

01189 011024

henry.hawes@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 14

Gordon Bird

01189 662934

gordon.bird@noda.org.uk



New Year's Parade

Younger Generation Named in Queen's Honours List

In conjunction with the 60th anniversary of the Queen's Coronation, 117 outstanding UK volunteering groups have been honoured as recipients of The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2013.

This unique UK national honour was created over a decade ago by Her Majesty to mark the Golden Jubilee in 2002 and to recognise the outstanding contributions made to local communities by groups of volunteers. It has an equivalent status for voluntary groups as the MBE has for individuals.

Winners will receive a certificate signed by the Queen and an exclusive commemorative crystal, presented by Her Majesty's Lord-

Lieutenants in their counties at special ceremonies arranged by the Lieutenancy offices.

The Younger Generation Theatre Group's first show was at the Ashcroft Theatre in 1988 with *Gotta Sing, Gotta Dance*. It was the brainchild of Frank Graves, who used to produce the South West London Gang Shows at Wimbledon Theatre. He wanted to give all young people, not only those associated with Scouting, the chance to appear on the stage. Unfortunately, Frank passed away earlier this year without knowing that the group he had created had obtained this amazing accolade.

For the last two years the group has been part of the winning entry from Merton in the

London Borough's New Year's Day Parade Competition, dancing their way through the streets of London and ending up in Whitehall and Parliament Square. This year's show, *Silver Stars*, will have a cast of 70 young people aged 9 to 18 years old, and, in their 25th anniversary year, will cover the last 25 years through music and song. At the end of the matinee performance on 31st August, they will be presented with their certificate trophy by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Croydon on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen, in front of an audience.

The citation on the certificate will read: "For giving young people aged 9 to 18 the opportunity to appear on a professional stage". ★

The Louise English Award



Each year, the London region awards the Louise English Award to a young person who has made an outstanding contribution to their society in any capacity whatsoever. Here's how it came about, followed by this year's recipient.

Louise English joined Belmont Theatre Company in 1998, despite suffering from cystic fibrosis and rheumatoid arthritis. This is a particularly nasty combination, for although cystic fibrosis can be relieved with regular exercise, due to her rheumatoid arthritis, this

was not possible for Louise. However, she never let these problems stop her from doing anything if she could help it.

Louise quickly became a firm favourite and a highly respected member of the company. She joined our committee as one of our membership secretaries, meeting and talking to many prospective new members. Louise also took it upon herself to arrange trips to see other local societies and rarely missed any social events. Above all though, Louise was an impressive young actress.

Sadly, in March 2005 Louise developed a chest infection and was taken into hospital. She died only a few days later at the age of 32.

Louise was a wonderful person who we will never forget. It seemed to me that we needed to commemorate Louise in a permanent way, so I persuaded Belmont committee, which was not difficult, to fund a trophy to be named The Louise English Award, in honour of all that she had achieved.

This Award has just been presented for the seventh time and it has been a pleasure to see the number of nominees increase year on year.

Bill Baynes,
Chairman, Belmont Theatre Company

And the winner is...

Heather Morgan is 25 years old and has been the Marlow Amateur Operatic Society (MAOS) Chairman for two years. Although MAOS was originally known for performing G&S, in 2009 the Society took a big risk by performing a more modern musical; however, this risk paid off. Heather joined the Society in 2010 in time for their second modern musical and instantly joined the Committee. In 2011, she became Chairman and has taken the Society in a completely different direction, deciding not to go back to G&S but to stick with performing modern musicals. She rebranded the Society as MAOS, which is now thriving with a new generation of young performers, all thanks to Heather's vision.

Not only does she run the Society but she has also played the female lead in the last three productions: 'Ariel' in *Footloose*

in 2011, 'Nikki Wade' in *Bad Girls the Musical* in 2012 and 'Sarah' in *Our House* in 2013. In addition to performing, she deals with various aspects of each show, including hiring and overseeing the creative team, liaising with the venue, dealing with sponsorship and creating the programme, along with many other admin tasks. Everyone wonders how she manages to juggle all this plus learning her lines and songs and working full time.

Heather is a very talented lady who has managed to achieve a lot despite her young age. We are very lucky to have her as our Chairman and we really appreciate what she does for the Society. We nominated her because we felt that she deserved some recognition for all of her hard work and we are delighted that she has won.



Heather Morgan being congratulated by NODA President Derek Grattidge



Music arranger and conductor Howard Faulks revisits Mozart

When Howard Faulks approached Maidenhead Operatic Society with the idea of bringing a new vision to that perennial favourite of opera lovers worldwide, *The Magic Flute*, they knew they were embarking on an exciting and challenging project. Howard's adaptation is in English, taking the lyrics and dialogue from the original German, but making them more contemporary and expanding the role of the chorus. Recitative was replaced by dialogue and repetitive passages trimmed, so that the wonderful arias and choruses for which *The Magic Flute* is so admired could be presented in a format that would appeal to those new to opera.

The production not only brought in many new principals, but also introduced Mozart to people more used to watching musicals at The Desborough Suite in Maidenhead. The reception from audience members was overwhelmingly enthusiastic and the society were delighted to learn that not only were their audiences impressed, but also that Howard and the Society were awarded the District 14 Flame Award for the production. ★

See what you could gain at NODA Summer School

With another successful NODA Summer School finished for the year, it's a good time to reflect on the impact the experience has on students who take part. Our testimonials from previous students highlight the benefits provided by the range of courses on offer, the confidence that can be gained by attending, the quality of the teaching and the transferable skills that you can take away to help your society. So if you're thinking about attending next year's NODA Summer School, held in the excellent facilities at Warwick Conferences, read these testimonials from two of our students and see if you like the sound of the Summer School experience.

Helen's story



I've attended NODA Summer School three times so far, doing different courses each year, and I've never been disappointed. The tutors are excellent, experienced, knowledgeable and capable of working with the wide range of abilities they are presented with.

Singing had always been something I lacked confidence in, but after attending Pam Rudge's singing course for a week my confidence really grew, and I played the lead role in *Sweet Charity* last year, something I would never have dreamed of before Summer School. My attendance at Summer School has also had an effect on my society, Waveney Light Opera Group, as after I first attended Summer School I ran a Physical Theatre workshop for my fellow members; some of those techniques have since been used in our musicals. After my singing course we invited Pam Rudge to deliver a singing weekend workshop to our members, and the success of this has resulted in the Committee creating a new post of Skills Development Officer.

Summer School is definitely a place to learn but it's also an opportunity to have lots of fun with people who think like you and love the same things you do. Warwick Conferences is an amazing venue, the five star accommodation is superb and the food is fabulous. It's no wonder I'm going back for a fourth time and I hope to be there in 2014 too."

Helen Roscoe

Andrew's story



This will be my fifth year attending NODA Summer School. Last year I attended the Musical Theatre in Performance class, and dance tutor Lynne Bustard and singing tutor Kelvin Towse worked us incredibly hard all week. It was very physical and intense from the moment we started in the morning but it was also tremendous fun.

I'd always been an actor rather than a singer or dancer, having previously taken Summer School classes in acting, so it was quite nerve-racking to begin with. However, there was a broad ability and age range in the class, and everybody was supportive of one another.

The key thing about Summer School is that the tutors are excellent. They push you to better yourself, and because of this I've learnt a lot from my Summer School experiences. Socially it's a fantastic week too. All the students are there to learn a subject they love, and enjoy themselves whilst doing it, so there's a wonderful sense of camaraderie. Also, the food is plentiful and tasty, and the accommodation is first class. What's not to love?"

Andrew Forrest

If you'd like to know more about Summer School 2014, look out for updates on the NODA website, or contact Head Office by calling 01733 374 790 or emailing info@noda.org.uk ★



regionalroundup

North



North Committee

Councillor
Gordon Richardson
0191 5810340
gordon.richardson@noda.org.uk

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

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

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

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

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

Youth Advisor
Position vacant

North Districts & Representatives

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

DISTRICT 2
Gwyneth Hunter
gwyneth.hunter@noda.org.uk

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

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

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

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

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

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

Councillor's Comments

I was privileged to take over the role of Councillor at our Regional AGM in March, and here I am four months into my tenure at the time of writing. Is it what I expected? I admit I expected it

to be difficult, with a steep learning curve, and the 'job' has not disappointed in that respect as I start to discover what is required of me personally, and what NODA North and myself can offer to our members. I said at our AGM that I would probably make mistakes in the coming year but that I would learn from them. What I could promise was that I'd try 100% to fulfil the trust placed in me. There is no doubt that our hobby is at a crossroads as we struggle to get bums on seats, attract youth and promote

ourselves effectively. Council is looking at ways to help in each of these criteria and we have to work together to achieve this.

I am thoroughly enjoying getting around and seeing societies, especially those I have never seen before, and so far have visited 36 of the societies in the region, as well as having met many of their officials at district meetings, with many more in the pipeline. What I am seeing is many societies who have the basics correct, but need that little bit of help in adopting new techniques to achieve their ultimate aim. Getting our business plan correct will be a struggle, but it will be one that I'm sure is achievable if we all pull together.

Gordon Richardson

Councillor, NODA North
gordon.richardson@noda.org.uk
Tel: 0191 5810340



National President Mr Derek Grattidge inaugurating Gordon Richardson as Councillor

Diary Dates

Saturday 14th September 2013
at 7.30pm:
Inaugural NODA North awards evening to be held at the Rainton Meadows Arena, Houghton-le-Spring. Awards will be presented by National President Mr Derek Grattidge.

Friday 7th to Sunday 9th March 2014:
NODA North weekend and AGM to be held in the Holiday Inn Hotel, Scotch Corner, near Richmond. To be attended by National President Mr Robert Lumsden.

Anniversaries

Immediate Past President
Mr Fred Piggford presents
Sunderland AOS stalwart
Barbara Simpson with her
60 year LSA

NODA North may well be the smallest of the 11 NODA regions but it certainly has tenacity and staying power, as evidenced by the many societies for whom 2013 is the year they have reason to celebrate a special moment in their histories.

From the far south of the Region, Allerton Players (formerly known as the Allertonshire Players) were formed 70 years ago during the Second World War, when local authorities provided non-vocational classes for adults during evening classes. Original tutor John Wood held a drama class at the Northallerton Evening Institute. They presented *Candida* by George Bernard Shaw, providing much needed respite during the war and post-war years, and helping to raise funds for charitable aims. This formula must have gone down very well as the society continues to this day, and present Chairman Paul Staines is confident that the Players will continue to go from strength to strength.

Also from the south of the region is Richmond OS, who this year celebrate their 90th anniversary. Their first production, *HMS Pinafore*, was a fundraiser as well as an attempt to gauge interest in the need for a production company. The production was originally shown in an adapted cinema, and the pioneers who made these adaptations were as versatile and adaptable then as in modern times, and after 14 years the group moved premises to the Zetland Cinema. Here, they had a number of obstacles to overcome, not least the lack of dressing rooms. Undeterred, chorus ladies changed next door in the Fire Station recreation room, while the men changed in the 'Buck Inn', a public house 100 yards away down a small back alley, which caused no end of problems with cues. The cast had to run in all weathers to their 'dressing rooms' for costume

changes. In 1947-1948 Richmond OS became the envy of many societies when they were able to purchase their own rehearsal room, the former Primitive Ebenezer Chapel, which they still have to this day. When the Zetland closed in 1991, the Society moved to the Georgian Theatre Royal, where it now produces shows. Members old and new recently celebrated Richmond OS's 90th anniversary at a gala dinner and now look forward to their centenary.

One Society celebrating its centenary year is Spennymoor Stage and Song, who have been providing entertainment in the town since 1912, with the exception of the war years. A Centenary Ball was held earlier this year for present and past members, and the group performed a fine production of *Chess*. After this, the group was presented with a NODA Centenary Certificate by Councillor Gordon Richardson and Immediate Past President Fred Piggford. Their special year concludes with a production of *The Sound of Music* later this year.

Felling Stage Society was formed in 1923 as Felling and District Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society, when Mr. W. W. Burt called a meeting of local Gilbert and Sullivan enthusiasts in the United Methodist Church in Felling. The Society was properly constituted later in the month with Mr. Burt as Chairman, a position he held for the next forty years. In October 1923, the Society put on its first production, *The Mikado*. More recently, the current Society held a ball to



celebrate its 90th anniversary on Saturday 6th July. Guests were invited to dress in 1920s style to celebrate the era of the Society's formation, and many attendees took this opportunity to dress to impress. The ball was attended by members past and present, their friends and family, along with their NODA Regional Representative Mrs Gwyneth Hunter and Past President of NODA Mr Ian Wells, a Life Member of the Society. After dinner guests were treated to the hilarious comedy of Brendan Healy, who is not only an actor, musician and comedian, but is also a huge supporter of theatre in the North East.

A Society that pre-dates NODA itself by some six years, Sunderland AOS recently celebrated its 120th year. The Society was founded in September 1893 by Mr Vincent, a local businessman whose family owned a music shop and organ factory. Their first production, *HMS Pinafore*, was acknowledged in their recent one night show entitled '120 Years of Entertainment'. Over the past 120 years, SAOS has built a reputation for producing performances of a professional standard. The Society presented the Northern premieres of *Evita* and *The Likes of Us*, and more recently has showcased *Copacabana* and *The Full Monty*. In recognition of the Society's longevity, Immediate Past President Fred Piggford presented Society Chairman Derek Crooks with a special certificate from NODA, as well as a Diamond Bar (60 years) to Barbara Simpson, whose membership of the group has spanned half of its existence.

In these times of uncertainty, the aforementioned societies, as well as all of the other groups in the NODA North family, continue to ensure that amateur theatre flourishes in the region. ★

Comedian Brendan Healy
flanked by Society Chair
Michelle Coulson and Secretary
Bea Atkinson



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North East

North East Committee

Councillor
David Streeter
0114 235 2490
david.streeter@noda.org.uk

Regional Secretary
Judy McMurray
0114 236 2430
judy.mcmurray@noda.org.uk

Regional Treasurer
Geoff Haywood
01226 724925
geoff.haywood@noda.org.uk

Membership Secretary
John Parsons
01724 334931
john.parsons@noda.org.uk

Web Manager
Bryan Craven
0113 252 2514
bryan.craven@noda.org.uk

Long Service Awards Secretary
Pamela Booth
01943 430318
pamela.booth@noda.org.uk

Magazine/News Editor
Julie Webb
0114 255 1869
julie.webb@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor
Giles Atkinson
01274 614393
giles.atkinson@noda.org.uk

North East Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1
Terry Harrison
01423 870656
terry.harrison@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2
Rosie Abel
07799 832766
rosalie.abel@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 3
Tony Harris
01377 272063
tony.harris@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 4
John Parsons
01724 334931
john.parsons@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 5
Leslie Smith
01226 756654
Leslie.smith@Noda.org.uk



A Successful 2013 Bridlington Gala Weekend: But What About 2014?

Finale of Shrektacular
Spectacular Dance
Workshop led by Dee
Bennie-Marshall

This year was my first North East annual gala weekend as Councillor. Of course these events don't happen by themselves, and in the case of the North East I am fortunate to have a committed and hard working sub group. Together we had fun planning and tasting the possible menus, balanced with some sleepless nights as the event drew near.

It all began on Friday afternoon when the early arrivals started to show up for the golf and ten pin bowling competitions. By the time Friday evening arrived, 650 were seated for dinner and Cutler's Theatre Company provided the evening entertainment, followed by a late night sing song with Alan Makinson.

On Saturday morning there were five streams of workshops located throughout the Spa Conference Complex, and in the afternoon I chaired my first North East AGM along with President Derek Grattidge and Chairman Chris Ingram, who both addressed the meeting. Saturday's evening entertainment was provided by the Take 2 Theatre School, with two performances of high energy, discipline and commitment, followed by the Gala Ball with four hours of dancing.

On Sunday morning the winners of Friday's competitions were announced, along with Summer School regional bursary winners, and salvers and framed certificates were presented to the Regional Programme and Poster Competition winners and runners up. The finale of the weekend event was our guest speakers The Grumbleweeds. From beginning to end they had the delegates in fits of laughter.

So what about Bridlington 2014? What changes would you like to see? I don't have the answers, but I would like to keep the event fresh every year. Please feel free to email me your comments.

Also, would your Society like to entertain us either on the Friday or Saturday evenings? Although volunteers have already been sourced for 2014, be confident, think ahead and throw your hat in the ring for 2015. Again, please email me for an informal discussion at David.Streeter@noda.org.uk.

I hope to see you all in Bridlington in 2014 from Friday 11th to Sunday 13th April.

David Streeter
Councillor, NODA North East

DISTRICT 6
Mary Titterton
0114 236 8619
mary.titterton@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 7
Noel Rigg
01924 466659
noel.rigg@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 8
Jean Taylor
01422 376058
david.streeter@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 9
Alan Smith
0113 257 3429
alan.smith@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 10
Jacqui Hartley
01422 321513
jacqui.hartley@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 11
Leslie Appleyard
01943 877347
leslie.appleyard@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 12
Judith Smith
01274 568305
judith.smith@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 13
Geoff Haywood
01226 724925
geoff.haywood@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 14
Julie Webb
0114 2551869
julie.webb@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 15
Pamela Booth
01943 430318
pamela.booth@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 16
Marguerite Jennings
01423 797714
marguerite.jennings@noda.org.uk

40 Years Young for Harrogate Gilbert & Sullivan Society

The last few months have been very hectic yet very enjoyable for the Harrogate G&S Society as they celebrate their 40th ruby anniversary.

In the summer of 1972 local solicitor Geoffrey Roberts founded the Harrogate G&S Society and became its Chairman. Their first production in May 1973 was *The Mikado*, performed at the Harrogate Theatre under the direction of ex D'Oyly Carte Principal Soubrette Joyce Wright. Seven very successful years later the late, great John Reed, who was for many years the principal patter man with the D'Oyly Carte, took over the mantle of Producer. Together with Jim Newby as Musical Director he steered the Society through the complete repertoire of all thirteen of the Savoy Operas. John was followed by Geoffrey Shovelton for a number of years, but for the last 11 years the Society has been under the Direction of Alistair Donkin.

This special anniversary year began last December at our annual Christmas Concert

at the Royal Hall. In honour of the Society, the world famous Championship Brighthouse & Rastrick Band played a special arrangement of songs from the Savoy Operas, and a production of *The Mikado* took place at the Harrogate Theatre to large audiences and outstanding critical acclaim. Almost twenty cast, stage crew, accompanists, committee and founder members from the 1973 production were traced and invited to a reunion, as well as being the Society's special guests at the opening night. They were joined by NODA officials and all five of the local Borough Council Mayors and Chairmen, and representatives from local G&S and Harrogate societies.

Judith Hardman, the first lady Chairman in the Society's history said: "It is the icing on the anniversary cake that the Society has been invited to take part in the 20th prestigious International G&S Festival in Buxton this year. I wish the Society every success, which is what it deserves, and will be in the audience spurring them on." ★



Yum Yum (Rachel Warren) and Nanki Poo (Colin Belsay) in 2013

Is *Pip* the show you're looking for?

Forty years ago John Higgins wrote a musical called *Pip*, which he had adapted from the Charles Dickens novel *Great Expectations*. The show had its premiere production for a week in 1972 at the 1000-seater Barnsley Civic Theatre, and was extremely well received by both audiences and the Hoyland Amateur Theatrical Society who produced it. The scores and libretti were then packed away, where they have remained until now.

John never made much attempt to interest other amateur or professional companies in performing the show. At the time, he knew

that many amateur companies, in a constant attempt to fill their theatres, often preferred to go for safer options. He also understood the colossal financial risks involved in mounting an unknown, professional musical. John's own semi-professional musical and directing career was also beginning to take off, and in an era without computers the logistics of publicising a new work for prospective production, and the time involved, led to the musical being shelved.

But times have changed. The current digital age has made it much easier to provide perusal copies of libs and scores online, and *Pip* has now been computerised to increase its availability. As such, another production of *Pip*

was planned in March 2013 by the Barnsley Amateurs Musical Theatre Group at the Lamproom Theatre.

The spectacle was brought to life by eleven major musical numbers ranging from the 'knees-up' variety to the poignantly romantic. It is a happy family show with lots of drama, dance, colour and spectacle, telling a brilliant story which is enhanced by an array of catchy and poignant tunes.

Enquiries are welcome from anyone wishing to perform the show and should be sent directly to the author, John Higgins, at joncargawber5@talktalk.net. ★





regionalroundup

North West

North West Committee

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

North West Districts & Representatives

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

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

DISTRICT 3
David Slater
01282 423079
david.slater@noda.org.uk

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

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

Councillor's Comments

Just a couple of days after another hugely successful North West Conference, the region was landed with the bombshell that our venue, the Hilton in Blackpool, would be unable to accommodate our 2014 event on the usual May Bank Holiday weekend.

Together with the North West committee, I immediately got on the case and am delighted to announce that the 2014 NODA North West weekend will take place from Friday 2nd May to Monday 5th May 2014 at the Mercure Manchester Piccadilly Hotel. This has a larger conference suite than the Hilton, with a real stage. It's very exciting to be going to a new and bigger venue, so please do come along and let us have your thoughts. Booking forms will be sent out in early February 2014 so book early to avoid disappointment.

Thank you to the 600 plus NODA North West members who attended our 2013 conference. It was a glittering event and I sincerely hope everyone enjoyed it. The company was excellent, the food was great and the drink flowed; what more could anyone wish for? Every nominee is a winner in the eyes of their Regional Representative, so again very many congratulations to everyone who was nominated. I must also thank the North West Regional Representatives and the Committee for their

tireless work towards the weekend, for their help, support, encouragement and enduring patience.

In other news, NODA North West has been very fortunate to be selected by Volunteering in Theatre Arts (ViTA), in association with NODA and the BBC, for a pilot scheme to encourage more people to volunteer in the arts, and work with and serve on the committees of individual societies. The pilot started in Merseyside in April and members of societies have had the opportunity to give BBC radio interviews. This is proving very beneficial and the scheme is being rolled out across the North West, so keep your eyes peeled for information.

So far we have had eleven entries to the NODA North West Drama Festival, so if you have not yet entered and are staging a play towards the end of the year, please do get in touch.

Finally, as always, a big thank you to the societies that have invited me to their productions. I have seen so many great shows, from small village halls to converted private houses and professional theatres. It's simply wonderful so do please keep the invitations coming in.

Christine Hunter Hughes
Councillor, NODA North West

Long service

For details of Long Service Awards presented in the region, please visit:
www.noda.org.uk/long_service_awards_in_the_north_west

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

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

DISTRICT 8
Michael Jones-McCaw
01457 810595
michael.jonesmccaw@noda.org.uk

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

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

DISTRICT 12
Pete Astbury
07811 788402
pete.astbury@noda.org.uk

NODA Rep Unlocks Heirloom Mystery

NODA North West District 11 Representative Katharine Carradus has been reunited with a long-lost family heirloom after it lay buried for decades. A silver locket was found in March during an archaeological dig at the former Kendal Auction Mart site.

Katharine was brought up in eighteenth century cottages next to the site which were knocked down in 1948 to extend the entrance to the Auction Mart. Her father Alfred Saul had lived there for 40 years and it was the house of his parents.

Katharine was alerted to the find when she read an article in her local paper *The*

Westmorland Gazette. She believes the young man pictured is her father Alfred Saul or his older brother, her uncle Albert. She has traced the Saul family back as far as 1765 and said the photo also bears a resemblance to her grandfather. She thinks it may even be the locket her grandmother is seen wearing in an old photograph.

Katharine said: "I don't want the locket put away in a drawer because it's been hidden away long enough. We've talked about it, and it will stay in Kendal."

The Auction Mart site is now being flattened to make way for 94 new houses and flats. ★



Katharine Carradus holds the long-lost family heirloom



Katharine's father Alfred in his Second World War uniform

Article and photos courtesy of *The Westmorland Gazette*

Clitheroe's Half Century



Clitheroe Parish Church Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society came into being 50 years ago. Its history, however, dates back to the turn of the twentieth century, when a church society began to stage Gilbert and Sullivan operas in 1909. It produced annual shows until the 1930s, when it was transformed into the town's own society, only to revert back to the church once again in 1963.

The Society has had an eventful fifty year history since its first production of *Carousel* in November 1963, which took place in the church hall. This was followed by a production of *Annie Get Your Gun*, during which a batten used to support the scenery snapped and had to be held in place throughout the entire performance by backstage workers. *The Count of Luxembourg* was the choice in 1969, but one of the principals, Margaret Brunnock, who took the part of 'Juliette', found she couldn't sing because of a throat infection. Instead she

mimed whilst her co-star Mary Metcalfe, who played 'Angele', sang her part from the wings.

In addition to eventful performances, the Society has also been extremely successful with audiences. The 1971 production of *My Fair Lady*, produced by Hilda Basnett, was watched by a total of 2,800 people during its week of performances. There was similar unprecedented demand for tickets for the 1973 show *South Pacific*, with block bookings from schools, pensioners and women's groups from Rishton, Great Harwood, Burnley and Padiham.



Occasionally the Society has been hit by illness. When Anne Mason, the principal dancer in the 1974 show *Brigadoon* fell ill, her dance mistress Mary

Waddington stepped in with just six hours' notice, 19 years after her last stage appearance in a ballet sequence during *Oklahoma*. The following year illness also hit Peter Kelly, the leading man in *The Desert Song*, and members of the cast donned their costumes to visit his bedside at Blackburn Royal Infirmary.

Today, the society has 40 members and is led by Chairman Brian Haworth. It produces a musical each February, this year it was *Kiss Me Kate*, and a comedy play in October. ★

Article courtesy of the *Lancashire Telegraph*

Obituaries



Brian at a wedding

A wonderful baritone who has performed on East Lancashire stages for more than 55 years has died. Award-winning director and performer Brian Whittaker died in July after an illness, aged 77.

He first took to the stage aged 15, but it was during national service with the RAF in Swindon that he became aware of the world of show business during trips to London. When he came home to Blackburn he started to sing with the big band at Tony's Ballroom where he 'made the girls swoon', according to his mother.

Daughter Susan Avenson said: "He took lessons and sang in festivals, winning many prizes for his wonderful baritone voice. In 1957, he joined Blackburn Amateurs, performed in the *Vagabond King*, and was hooked. He often stepped in to save the day at very short notice." Susan continued, saying: "With Burnley Gilbert and Sullivan Society he once stood in to direct *HMS Pinafore* and *Trial by Jury* with just four weeks' notice and then also learned the part of Sir Joseph Porter with

24 hours to go until curtain up."

His principal debut was as 'Ali Hakim' in *Oklahoma* in 1958. His last performance was as 'LeClerc' in Blackburn Drama Club's production of 'Allo 'Allo at the Thwaites Empire Theatre in November.

In the early 1970s he was offered a contract



Brian as Major General

with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, but decided against signing it, to be with his family.

Susan added: "His great love was performing in the Savoy Operas, becoming well-known for his excellent performances in patter roles. He was a lovely, sensitive leading man, and also loved comic and character roles. He had a great sense of comic timing, but could equally turn in a sensitive dramatic performance and frequently brought a tear to the eye."

Brian won NODA awards for the best supporting actor in a play and in a musical. He was a member of, among others: Blackburn Light Opera Society, Blackburn Amateurs, Blackburn Arts Club, Blackburn Drama Club, Clitheroe Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society, St Gabriel's Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society, Blackburn G&S, Burnley Light Opera Society, Burnley G&S, Christchurch Operatic Society, and St Mary's Operatic and Dramatic Society.

Article courtesy of the Lancashire Telegraph

Tributes have been paid to Whitehaven Theatre Group stalwart Cuthbert Murphy. Cuthbert died in June and members of the West Cumbrian amateur theatre scene attended a requiem mass at St Mary's Cleator Church on 2nd July.

Cuthbert had appeared in many local societies' musicals and plays, but will be best remembered as Artistic Director of Whitehaven Theatre Group. His most recent success was *Grease*, which was very well received by audiences.

NODA North West District 10 Representative

Ed McGee said: "I met him while visiting the show and he was delighted with the performance. His theatrical enthusiasm hadn't waned over the years. Cuth will be a hard act to follow with the Whitehaven Theatre Group and will be sadly missed by all the amateur theatre fraternity in West Cumbria."



Volunteer Conference Highlights the State of the Sector



The NODA Volunteer Conference 2013, held at the wonderful Warwick Conferences, was a successful weekend of workshops, training and socialising among NODA representatives. NODA took on board feedback from delegates following the last Volunteer Conference in 2011 and incorporated fewer but longer and more engaging workshops, with more free time to relax and mingle. There were opportunities for input and debate in both the plenary sessions and the workshops, and lots of important ideas and concepts to take forward were developed. Particularly helpful was the notice board of post-it note comments that was left, with lots of positive and negative feedback on NODA that can be taken on board and incorporated into future improvements.

In the opening plenary, NODA CEO Tony Gibbs presented on 'The State of the Sector' and highlighted a number of interesting points based on a survey in *Sardines* magazine and the recent NODA publication survey. Worryingly, of all respondents, nearly 45% stated that the financial health of their society was either 'getting by', 'struggling' or 'not good', indicating that the financial state of the sector is poor. It also highlighted that the average adult ticket price for an amateur production is £10.18, which, although an increase of about £2 since this question was last asked by NODA three years ago, is still greatly lagging behind general cost increases.

In addition to the financial state of the sector, the presentation also highlighted that the NODA website was the most visited amateur theatre website amongst respondents, and that 96% of NODA members have access to the internet. Furthermore, 43% of respondents wanted more general NODA information online, although there was a nearly even 50/50 split between those who wanted to receive NODA publications in either print or digital form. The high percentage of NODA members online is positive news, as is the demand for online information, but we should not forget that there is still equal demand for print and digital content.

NODA Chairman Chris Ingram at the 2013 Volunteer Conference



We're delighted to say it's not just NODA that's interested in the state of the amateur theatre sector. The first ever academic study into amateur theatre is currently underway, and we're very excited to be collaborating with the participating universities of Exeter, Warwick and Royal Holloway. We'll keep you updated on the progress of this study and in time we'll be looking for societies and individuals to participate in the research, so be on the lookout for information on the NODA website, and on Facebook and Twitter. You can also follow the academics in charge of the research on Twitter @amateurdrama. ★



regional roundup

Scotland

Scotland Committee

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

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

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

Youth Advisor
Kenny Christie
01382 524841
kenny.christie@noda.org.uk

Scotland Districts & Representatives

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

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

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

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

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

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

DISTRICT 7
John Urquhart
01592 200094
john.urquhart@noda.org.uk

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



Disney's Aladdin Junior,
Calderhead High School, Shotts

Successful Youth Project for Shotts St Patrick's Amateur Opera Group

A challenge for almost all amateur musical theatre societies is the continual recruitment of people, particularly young people, to secure the future of societies. That's why we at Shotts St. Patrick's Amateur Opera Group, based in NODA Scotland District 5, decided to go ahead with an innovative project within our community to produce a children's show with recruits from the surrounding primary and high schools.

In April 2013, 43 children aged between 9 and 13, all from five local primary schools and two local high schools, took part in a production of Disney's *Aladdin Junior* in Calderhead High School, Shotts. This followed a very successful recruitment project

in local schools, with almost 60 children turning up to the auditions.

The show in April followed a 14 week rehearsal period, which was overseen by our Musical Director and members of the Opera Group as singing and drama coaches. One of the

main aims of the Curriculum for Excellence, the curriculum for schools in Scotland, is to develop our young people to be confident individuals, successful learners, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Through this arts project we were able to raise awareness among children of how enjoyable an experience taking part in a show can be. At the same time the children involved were able to gain confidence and develop artistically, educationally and as individuals. The emphasis was on enjoyment within a disciplined rehearsal environment, which resulted in an unforgettable experience for all the children involved.

In order to help defray the costs of staging this production, each child in the cast was asked to pay a small fee each week. The production was a sell out for all four performances over the weekend with a total of 640 in our audiences. Following our success, all the children and their parents continue to ask when they can next take part, and they enjoy putting forward suggestions for future shows. All in all, it was a worthwhile project in all regards and one that we will look to carry out again in the future. As well as the benefits for the children, we have been able to build a strong base of young potential recruits to keep our group moving forward. Furthermore, being aware of the high cost of an annual senior production, we were able to fundraise, which proved very successful and helped to alleviate financial pressures. ★

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

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

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



A Year in the Life of the Livingston Players

Livingston Players have had a very busy and award winning year. We started off in the summer of 2012 rehearsing for our extremely successful October production of *Calendar Girls*, directed by John Hutchinson, which sold out at the Howden Park Centre. Not only this, but the show also raised almost £7,000 for charity and won the SCDA's (Scottish Community Drama Association) Eastern Division One Act Play Festival.

As we seem to be a company that never sleeps, we moved swiftly onto rehearsals for our next full length play *Barefoot in the Park*, directed by Lynne Hurst and performed in January 2013. Alongside

Barefoot, we rehearsed for the SCDA One Act Play Festival with *The Donahue Sisters*, directed by Ronnie Barnes, which ended up being extremely successful for us. As well as winning the Edinburgh heat, the production won prizes for best production and best stage presentation. At the Eastern Division final, not only did we come first but we were also awarded the prize for highest marks allocated for acting and production.

This earned our three girls a place in the Scottish final, which took place at the Festival Theatre in Pitlochry. Although our winning streak with the play ended at the final, in the year between *Calendar Girls* and *The Donahue Sisters* we scooped seven trophies, which is no mean feat

for a wee drama group from Livingston.

In January of this year we began rehearsals for our May production of *Blackfriars Wynd*, which was well received by those who saw it and helped us to gain a number of new members, which is always a positive outcome. We are now rehearsing for our next production, the amateur premiere of *Takin' Over the Asylum*, which will appear at the Howden Park Centre as a playfest alongside our version of *The Donahue Sisters* in October. Our next productions will be *The Steamie* in January and *Jesus Christ Superstar* in May. ★

Pam Murray
President, Livingston Players

NODA Scotland Archive

Jimmy Walker, NODA Scotland Archivist, is in the process of compiling a full list of productions of all Scottish societies since their inauguration.

Societies are requested to scan the lists of previous productions which normally appear in show programmes and send them to him in jpeg format by e-mail attachment.

Jimmy's contact details are:
E-mail: cujimmy01@btinternet.com
Telephone: 0141 647 5960

Harlequin's performance of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (Colin Dougall)



Harlequin Eastwood Theatre for Youth

Harlequin Eastwood Theatre for Youth in NODA Scotland District 4 was established in 1997 with the purpose of forming a theatre

group that catered solely for the needs of young people in the Giffnock area to the south of Glasgow. In their very first show,

Snow White, there were 58 young people on stage, which established the large casts that are characteristic of the club today.

The club has a number of objectives. Firstly, they aim to provide young people with the opportunity to take part at every point in a variety of dramatic productions; secondly, to stimulate an interest in drama and music of all kinds; and lastly, to assist charitable causes that are determined by the club.

The club has two performing member sections: juniors aged 9 to 13 years, and seniors aged 14 to 21 years. Three musical theatre shows are performed each year, with one show performed by each section and a pantomime in which both sections take part. All shows are normally performed in Eastwood Park Theatre and the club is well established as a loved and respected part of the local community. We are fortunate that our production teams frequently consist in part or entirely of previous performing members. For example, in our most recent junior show of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, both Director Alasdair Hawthorn and Choreographer Lorna Dennison were former performing members. ★

Tam McLean

President, Harlequin Eastwood Theatre for Youth

Langholm Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society: 90 Years of Song and Drama

It all started on 12th April 1922, when a meeting of interested parties resolved to form the Langholm Amateur Operatic Society and decided to stage *The Mikado*. As a result, in April 1923 the stage curtains in Langholm opened for the first time on the courtyard of Ko-Ko's residence in the town of Titipu. To the applause of an enchanted audience statues of the gentlemen of Japan suddenly came to life and the opening chorus raised the roof. The opera was here to stay. By the mid-1920s a drama section was organized to perform a play each year, which they still do today.

With the start of the Second World War in 1939 the stage lights had to be extinguished and the opera returned only with the dawn of a new age of freedom. The first production in March 1947 was again to be *The Mikado*, harking back to pre-war days. In 1948 the Society joined NODA and since then it has gone from strength to strength, although its time has

not been altogether trouble free. In 1950 the hall it used was sold to local industry and the Society was forced to use a small church hall for productions, and as a result had to build a stage, make stage curtains and erect a tent outside as a changing room. In this location, *HMS Pinafore* was produced, together with another three productions, before the brand new Buccleuch Hall housed *A Waltz Dream*. It really was a dream come true.

Romance was in the air too when handsome young Alex Pool, a great actor and singer, joined the Society in 1952 and fell for Marion Hyslop. After appearing as the young leading principals in *The Arcadians* in 1956, they were subsequently married. Since this time, Alex has been made an Honorary Member of NODA after 25 years of service as NODA Representative for District 11.

Later in the century, the Society continued to perform a number of great shows. In 1972, *Iolanthe* was chosen for the second time, and 'Strephon' was played by a very young Gregor

Fisher, better known now as Rab C. Nesbitt. The Society celebrated its Golden Jubilee with *The Count of Luxembourg*, but unfortunately a week before the show the leading lady had a family bereavement and could not perform. After a hurried consultation with NODA to find a company which had produced the show recently, Sheena Ashdown of St Andrews Amateur Operatic Society stepped in before the dress rehearsal. She fitted in beautifully and was a hit with the audiences.

There are a thousand memories of shows here in Langholm. Once again the now silent voices of the past 90 years are urging us to keep the opera and drama alive and we must carry on what they started way back in 1922. We raise a glass in tribute to those whose final curtain has closed forever and we give heartfelt thanks for our Society today. Here's to the next 90 years. ★

Marion M. Pool

Life Member, Langholm Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society

Helping NODA Members

To be or not to be (safe)? ...that is the question

I have always wanted to start a piece quoting (or misquoting) the Bard! Firstly, let's get the introductions out of the way. My name is Neil and I work in partnership with NODA to bring our members a new safety advice service called NODASafe. What's it all about? Well, it's very much up to you to provide us with the queries that we can help you with and we provide advice on best practice. I have been involved with safety for about twenty years and have been a dedicated safety professional for nine years. I have also been involved in amateur theatre for well over twenty five years. I have had the diverse roles of actor, director, producer, stage manager, lighting technician, sound operator, theatre chairman, ticket manager, front of house manager, festival organiser and regional administrator. So, as you can see, I have a fair bit of experience in the community theatre world, one where I have been able to make many good friends. Theatre makes up a huge part of my life and so does safety.

The premise of NODASafe is that safety shouldn't take up lots of time, but should be something that is done as part of this great hobby of ours. There is a lot of negativity connected to health and safety, and lots of people think that health and safety regulations are there to put a stop to people working and, in the case of amateur theatre, to prevent us pursuing our hobby. We at NODASafe understand that point of view: we all get enough of

that sort of stuff at work, so why do we need to do it in our hobby too?

Setting aside the legal and financial implications, we would start by asking why we take part in amateur theatre. More often than not, it's all about enjoying yourself with like-minded people who are your friends. It's those friends, and you of course, that we are thinking of. NODASafe firmly believe that everyone who goes to a rehearsal, attends your performances, helps out front of house, stage manages the production, is the director, the MD or in the band, all have one thing in common: they all deserve and have the right to leave with the same number of fingers and toes that they came in with. Nobody would wish another person to have an accident, to be injured, or worse.

The services that we provide, such as the helpline and production safety documents, which can be found online at the NODA website, are there to help you and your friends to remain as safe as you can be whilst pursuing this great hobby. If you would like to get in touch with us regarding any queries you can email us at nodasafe@noda.org.uk, call the advice line on **0845 257 6632** or send us a tweet @NODASAFE.

If you are going to the AGM in Peebles then come and say hello: we don't bite! To all those about to put on a show, please have a look at those production documents as they are there to help.

Break a leg... not literally though! ★

Neil Maidman, NODASafe



noda
S A F E



regionalroundup

South East

South East Committee

Councillor

John W Barnes

01580 830830

john.barnes@noda.org.uk

Regional Secretary

Priscilla Tifford

01892 669719

priscilla.tifford@noda.org.uk

Regional Treasurer

Bob Cousins

01276 23130

bob.cousins@noda.org.uk

Membership Secretary

Ms Marie Coltman

01202 581385

marie.coltman@noda.org.uk

Web Manager

Stuart Ardern

023 8029 3120

stuart.ardern@noda.org.uk

Awards Secretary

Margaret Coltman

margaret.coltman@noda.org.uk

Magazine/News Editor

Gregory Gower

01323737813

gregory.gower@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor (East)

Amelia Regnante

07840 882944

amelia.regnante@noda.org.uk

Youth Advisor (West)

John E. Thomas

023 9225 6443

john.thomas@noda.org.uk

Councillor's Comments

Our Big Gig

In July, Battle Light Opera Group participated in the national 'Our Big Gig' by hosting a number of workshops in musical theatre. Will Cousins from the Guildford School of Acting ran a movement and dance workshop, former member of D'Oyly Carte Jane Metcalf ran an operetta style vocal technique workshop, and there was an acting workshop run by local director and performer Bob Murray. All of these workshops were free and aimed to bring the community together to celebrate local musical talents and get more people involved in the arts. They were followed by familiarisation for *HMS Pinafore*, the Group's next production which is to be performed in November at Battle Memorial Hall.

A New Society

How often does one hear about a new society starting? Well, that is just what's happened in Bognor Regis. Jackie Kenyon and her daughter Abigail have set up Knightstar Productions in memory of Jackie's father, Colin Knight, who died just over three years ago. Their first production at the end of June 2013 was the Kander & Ebb musical *The World Goes Round*, held in the Regis Centre, Bognor Regis. This production provided the opportunity for the cast to showcase the wealth of local talent within the society. Jackie is a strong supporter of NODA Summer School and naturally Knightstar Productions has become affiliated to NODA. Long may this new society provide entertainment for Bognor Regis and the surrounding area.

Leatherhead Drama Festival

At the Leatherhead Drama Festival in May, Cobham Players won the Adult Section with their production of *September in the Rain* by John Godber. The Best Adult Actor award went to Jason Lambert for 'Jack' in *September in the Rain*.

John W Barnes

Councillor, NODA South East

South East Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1

Phillip Hall

01273 473500

phillip.hall@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2

Brenda Gower

01323 737813

brenda.gower@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 3

Anne Lawson

01424 428693

anne.lawson@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 5

Gordon Harris

01634 402323

gordon.harris@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 6

Ben Clark

07718 087438

ben.clark@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 7

Doreen Grierson

01474 813611

doreen.grierson@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 8

Lance Milton

08719 182218

lance.milton@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 9

Jose Harrison

01903892248

jose.harrison@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 10

John E. Thomas

023 9225 6443

john.thomas@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 11

Barbara Fairclough

01489 690140

barbara.fairclough@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 12

Gloria Smith

01932 866323

gloria.smith@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 13

Stuart Ardern

023 8029 3120

stuart.ardern@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 14

Kay Rowan

01420 83076

kay.rowan@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 15

Roy Brown

023 9283 9888

DISTRICT 16

Rita Boffin

019 8373 1491

rita.boffin@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 17

Margaret Fields

01962775438

margaret.fields@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 18

Betty Haslam

01420 83532

betty.haslam@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 19

Jon Fox

020 8668 6768

jon.fox@noda.org.uk

Award Winning Year for Tenterden

This year Tenterden Operatic and Dramatic Society (TODS) entered two productions for the countywide Full Length Drama Festival, held by the Kent Drama Association. Despite the stiff competition from much larger societies from Dartford, Chatham, Hayes, Gravesend, Whitstable and Maidstone, TODS achieved phenomenally, winning a number of awards.

The adjudicator this year was Arthur Rochester of GoDA (Guild of Drama Adjudicators), who scored many different aspects of each play to produce three nominations in each category.

The final results were presented at The Playhouse Theatre in Whitstable on Saturday 22nd June. TODS's January production of *Calendar Girls* by Tim Firth won the RaTS Trophy for Ensemble Acting, and Heather Leslie, James Bradford and John Sewell were runners up for Best Director, Best Actor in a Cameo Role and Best Sound, respectively. The play, one of 15, came fourth overall.

In May, TODS also entered *The New Electric Ballroom* by Enda Walsh. Karen Wright

received the Irene Weller/Adjudicator's Special Award for all round creativity and Geoff Dale won the trophy for Best Actor in a Supporting Role. In addition, Julie Austin and Karen Wright were runners up for Best Actress and Best Set Design, respectively. The production as a whole was runner up for

Initiative in Stage Presentation and the play came in at third place overall, winning the Weald Cup.

For a small society the results were quite splendid and confirm TODS's aim to consistently present quality drama. ★



TODS production of *The New Electric Ballroom*

Winchester Operatic Society's Special Year

Winchester Operatic Society (WOS) was founded in 1912 and staged its first production a century ago in 1913. To celebrate the occasion, from July 2012 to June 2013 the Society held a year of events to commemorate 100 years of musical theatre in Winchester. The year began with a celebration lunch in the city's Guildhall in June 2012 and ended with a garden party in July 2013. WOS were delighted to welcome NODA Regional Councillor John Barnes to both events.

As the most important activity for any society is its shows, two were presented during the centenary year to showcase the considerable range of WOS talent. In November 2012 WOS performed *The Merry Widow*, which was well received and won two awards: a Curtain Call Award for Best Actress in an Operetta and the NODA Regional Councillor's Musical Accolade. In addition to this, the WOS

space-age production of *HMS Pinafore*, which preceded the centenary shows, also received an accolade. In May 2013, as the celebrations came to an end, WOS staged its first modern musical: a production of *Billy*, based on the musical *Billy Liar* by John Barry and Don Black. A stunning performance from Chris Horn in the title role and fantastic ensemble work took Winchester by storm, earning praise from local theatre critics.

So, a great end to a remarkable year. Rehearsals are already underway for *Patience* in November 2013, to be followed by *High Society* in May 2014.

In November 2014 WOS is delighted to be presenting *Oh! What a Lovely War* with Suzanne Hall at the helm, who directed *HMS Pinafore* and *Billy* with West Meon Theatre. WOS looks well set for the next 100 years.

All WOS shows are performed at the Theatre Royal Winchester (www.theatreroyalwinchester.co.uk). Full details are also on the Society's website: www.winchester-operatic.org.uk. ★

Gill Russell
Press/Publicity, Winchester Operatic Society



Alison Bradley as 'Anna' in *The Merry Widow*

Ragtime the Musical: A chance that paid off for Milton Musical Society

We knew it wasn't going to be easy to put on a relatively unknown show, but after seeing a superb, award-winning professional performance of *Ragtime* at the Landor Theatre in Clapham, South London, where we all laughed, cried and marvelled, we resolved to do it justice. Our Society performed *Ragtime* this April at the Regent Centre in Christchurch, Dorset.

The show focuses on three different groups in America at the turn of the twentieth century: African-Americans in Harlem, travelling Eastern European immigrants and a middle-class New York family. As such, putting on *Ragtime* has been a remarkable journey, due in part to the lack of tradition or opportunity for black performers in our area. However, through adverts in local papers, appeals on the radio and making contacts through local groups, we held a Saturday morning event to invite those from the black community who were interested in performing to meet existing members of the group.



In the late summer of 2012 I held auditions for cast members. We had a good turnout following our previous efforts and we quickly cast the lead characters of Coalhouse Walker Junior and his lover Sarah. Nikki Northern-Hart was cast as 'Sarah' and her rendition of 'Your Daddy's Son' brought tears to my eyes.

Auditions for the rest of the cast followed in September 2012 and rehearsals began in December of the same year. The cast worked hard on the complicated show and the rehearsal schedule was demanding: we met two evenings a week and Sunday afternoons until the show in April. However this was no hardship, as the show is rewarding in both rehearsal and performance. We clapped and cheered the principals, laughed at the comedy and cried at the tragedy.

Ragtime is an unknown show and as such extra marketing was required to convince audiences to take a chance and buy tickets. In the end, the fantastic efforts of Jonathan Shiner and Nick Squires paid dividends, with only 25 empty seats out of 400 on the last night. This was helped by the fantastic publicity shots, with photographs of the actual performers cleverly photoshopped into historic backgrounds. This was a first for Milton Musical Society, but one that really worked for us.



At heart it is the music that defines the show, and our talented music team and large orchestra were led by Lee Marchant. The score is wonderfully complicated and diverse, and we used a pianist rather than recordings for our rehearsals, which would not do justice to the music.

For me, to exert considerable energy and take the time to direct a show, then it has to have purpose. This is a show with a strong plot, big characters and the most marvellous music. It tells a powerful tale as it explores human fragility, aggression, greed, prejudices, loves and hates, but it fills you with hope for the future. That is the real purpose, and it was truly worth the sleepless nights. ★

John Teather

Director of *Ragtime the Musical*
Milton Musical Society

Panto Workshops Raise Funds for Plaza Theatre

Members of Romsey Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society (RAODS) have been preparing for this year's pantomime season by developing and honing their panto skills. This is in preparation for the forthcoming production of *Robin Hood* at the Plaza Theatre in Romsey, which will run for fifteen performances in January 2014.

Following a glowing review of Bob Heather and Cheryl Barrett's *Robin Hood* script in *Amateur Stage* magazine, RAODS decided that this was the script they wanted for 2014. Bob is directing the show, and along with co-writer Cheryl Barrett, has offered to run a free pantomime

workshop as a fundraiser to support the Plaza Future Fund. This was set up to raise money to enhance the performance area of the Plaza Theatre, including a revolving stage and easier access to the auditorium via a new lift. The workshop will include help on auditioning for pantomimes and developing acting skills.

Playwrights Bob and Cheryl have been successfully running pantomime workshops up and down the country and are currently writing an all-encompassing book on pantomime. Using prepared short excerpts from some of their joint pantomime scripts, such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and

Old King Cole, along with practical exercises and pantomime techniques, the workshops explore a range of panto essentials.

Cheryl and Bob have received calls from various places to bring their workshops to wider audiences. In response, last October they ran a pantomime workshop for the LTG's (Little Theatre Guild of Great Britain) regional AGM and conference. The workshop was well attended and among their number was Sir Ian McKellen. Societies and groups that have had the benefit of attending these workshops have said how much they have helped to enhance and improve their productions. ★

NDFA British All Winners Drama Festival 2013

This year, the National Drama Festivals Association (NDFA) celebrated its 40th All Winners Festival in Teignmouth, Devon. The event was hosted by the Teignmouth Drama Festival and brought together winning plays from drama festivals across the British Isles. NDFA showcases the 'best of the best', giving theatre groups the opportunity to compete against each other. Along with the Youth Festival and a one act playwriting competition, the Festival provided a great week of amateur theatre.

This year in Teignmouth we were blessed with a venue by the sea and the most wonderful weather possible. Teams came from across the country and the Festival was full of like minded people who, whilst keenly competitive, appreciated and supported the work of other teams. Naturally, people had different views of the plays performed and

that created interesting discussion points at the aftershow gatherings each night.

During the week we also had a rehearsed reading of the one act play winner at the Teign Heritage Centre, a workshop by one of the RSC's own practitioners as part of their 'Open Stages' programme, a workshop by Tony Rushforth of GoDA on directing, a coach trip to Dartmoor and a civic reception given by the Mayor at Bitton House. It really was a great celebration for all involved.

The results of the Festival are to the right, but before you check them out please note that next year the NDFA Drama Festival will take place on the Isle of Man, from Sunday 20th to Saturday 26th July, as part of the year-long celebration of the Manx Island of Culture. It will be a fantastic time to visit the Isle of Man and it would be wonderful if you were able to join the All Winners Festival week. We look forward to seeing you there! ★



NODA President Derek Grattidge presents the Halifax Evening Courier Award for Audience Appreciation (courtesy of Brian Harris)

- ★ **40th British All Winners Drama Festival Results:**
- ★ **Full Length Winner** [The Mary Blakeman Trophy] - Concept Players, Cardiff, with **The 39 Steps**
- ★ **Runner Up** [Amateur Stage Trophy] - Boston Playgoers, Boston, with **The Weir**
- ★ **Adjudicator's Award** [Felixstowe Festival Trophy] - Liz Brooks of St Austin's Players as 'Maggie' in **Hobson's Choice**
- ★ **Backstage Award** [Sydney Fisher Trophy] - Concept Players, Cardiff, with **The 39 Steps**
- ★ **Audience Award** [Halifax Evening Courier] - Concept Players, Cardiff, with **The 39 Steps**
- ★ **One Act Winner** [Irving Trophy] - Legion Players, Isle of Man, with **Kecks**
- ★ **Runner Up** [NDFA Council Trophy] - Horsell ADS, Woking, with **This Repulsive Woman**
- ★ **Adjudicator's Award** [Amateur Theatre Trophy] - Teignmouth Players, Teignmouth, with **Ever Young**
- ★ **Backstage Award** [Sydney Fisher Trophy] - Horsell ADS, Woking, with **This Repulsive Woman**
- ★ **Audience Award** [Isle of Man Newspaper Award] - Horsell ADS, Woking, with **This Repulsive Woman**
- ★ **Youth Section Winner** [NDFA Trophy] - Taunton School, Taunton, with **Burn Up**
- ★ **Buxton Trophy** (for the most promising youth participation in the whole festival) - Matthew Mahoney as 'Joey the Birdman' in **Burn**, by the Applause Youth Theatre
- ★ **Nan Nuttall Award** (for youth encouragement) - Applause YT, Leatherhead, with **Burn**
- ★ **Audience Award** [GADOC Joyce Cook Memorial] - Taunton School, Taunton, with **Burn Up**
- ★ **One Act Playwriting Competition Winner** [George Taylor Memorial Award] - **Hanging About For 2059** by David Hart, recommended by Haverhill Festival



regionalroundup

South West

Zenith Youth Theatre Company gains The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

South West Committee

Councillor
Nick Lawrence
01404 758 463
nick.lawrence@noda.org.uk

Regional Secretary
Iain Douglas
07880 543 719
iain.douglas@noda.org.uk

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

Membership Secretary
Peter Wheeldon
01929 552 092
peter.wheeldon@noda.org.uk

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pantomime Liaison
Iain Douglas
07880 543 719
iain.douglas@noda.org.uk

The Bath-based Zenith Youth

Theatre Company are delighted to be able to announce that they have become one of 117 organisations granted The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2013.

Set up in 2002 in celebration of Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee, this award for groups in the community was established to recognise those who give their time freely for the benefit of others. It is the highest honour that can be bestowed upon groups of this kind and is equivalent in status to the MBE. As such, The Queen's Award not only serves to provide recognition for volunteer groups, but also demonstrates the high respect in which volunteering is held and sets the national benchmark for excellence in volunteering, with the work of those awarded being judged to be of the highest standard.

The Zenith citation on the award reads: 'Zenith Youth Theatre Company – Dedicated to supporting young people through opportunities to take part in stage productions, increasing and

enhancing their social circle and building confidence.'

Organisations receiving this year's award were selected from groups nominated by members of the public who have been helped personally or witnessed the benefits of a group's work in their community.

Zenith will receive a certificate signed by the Queen and an exclusive, commemorative crystal presented by Her Majesty's representative, the Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset Lady Gass JP, at a special ceremony. The company now has the right to use The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service logo on their letterheads,

documents and website.

Scott Rogers, the Artistic Director said: "This award is a tribute not only to hundreds of dedicated volunteers that give up hours of their time, but also to anyone who has ever lifted a paintbrush, sold a raffle ticket or helped in any way over the last 50 years. To be given this award as we start our golden anniversary year is a wonderful honour that will really help make the year a special moment in the company's history."

In honour of being granted the award, four members of the production team were invited to attend a royal garden party at Buckingham Palace. ★



Zenith at Buckingham Palace

South West Districts & Representatives

DISTRICT 1
Lesley Hibbs
01736 763 261
lesley.hibbs@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 2
Kathy West
01208 816 214
kathy.west@noda.org.uk

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

DISTRICT 4
Iain Douglas
07880 543 719
iain.douglas@noda.org.uk

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

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

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

DISTRICT 8
Trudi Dyke
07850 155 386
trudi.dyke@noda.org.uk

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

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

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

DISTRICT 11
Peter Wheeldon
01929 552 092
peter.wheeldon@noda.org.uk

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

DISTRICT 13
Tony Winstone
07974 289 817
tony.winstone@noda.org.uk

DISTRICT 14
Graeme Savage
07850 179 642
graeme.savage@noda.org.uk

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

Sing-along Success with The Sound of Music

How Bath Light Opera Group enhanced their recent production of *The Sound of Music* without infringing their license.

On a recent run at the Theatre Royal in Bath with *The Sound of Music*, the Bath Light Operatic Group (BLOG) had one of its most successful weeks of ticket sales in years. On the Friday night, they had a 'Sing with BLOG' night based on the successful *Singalonga-Sound of Music*, with audience members dressed up in costume and both the actors and audience singing tracks alongside the running film.

Despite some initial concerns about whether the cast would be happy with people singing along, the atmosphere generated was fantastic. The audience got into the fancy dress spirit, along with some of the orchestra, and sang along with great enthusiasm, but were also very respectful of the live performances. Virtually the whole auditorium

was on their feet by the end of 'Climb Ev'ry Mountain' and the whole company were still buzzing from excitement the next day.

In terms of licensing, Singalonga Productions will not give permission for any society to do an official *Singalonga Sound of Music* in the exact way that they run them, along with other films such as *Grease*, *Hairspray* and *Rocky Horror*. That is, they will not allow a society to have a compere or fancy dress competitions, and they do not allow for the name *Singalonga Sound of Music* to be used, for which they own the copyright. However, they cannot stop audiences from singing along of their own accord.

Secondly, and most importantly, the 'Sing with BLOG' night did not change the existing production in any way; it was performed onstage just as it was on any other night, with no cuts, amendments or additions. This is vital and it is important that NODA is not seen to be encouraging societies to make any unlicensed

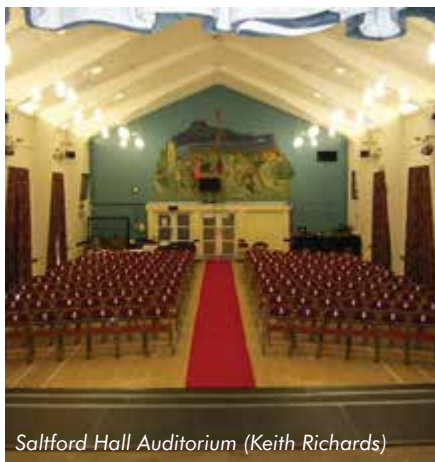
changes to their existing productions. The society simply let it be known through their posters and Box Office staff that singing along was to be actively encouraged on a particular night only. They also had a captioning screen at the side of the stage and on occasion the Musical Director turned to conduct the audience rather than the orchestra.

This is an extremely effective technique for boosting ticket sales through wider public interest if you do it right. BLOG Chairman

Rich Tottman can be contacted through the BLOG website if you want to know more about the planning and success of the event, as well as the logistics of something like surtitling. ★



Graeme Savage
NODA SW Regional Rep
for District 14



Saltford Hall Auditorium (Keith Richards)

Saltford Drama Club and Keynsham Light Opera Club tell us about their venue and how it could also be of use to you.

Situated between Bath and Bristol, the hall at Saltford proudly boasts a 250 seat theatre complete with a unique fly tower. Saltford Hall was built in 1958 with a huge amount of volunteer help driven by the late Gordon Reed, a keen theatre lover whose vision and foresight were responsible for the addition of the fly tower.

Saltford Hall: A Great Place to Put on a Show

The NODA award-winning Saltford Drama and Keynsham Light Opera Clubs have been performing musicals at the hall for over twenty years. The Hall has also seen many varied and well known performers over the years, including Semprini, Fanny Craddock and Gardeners' Question Time. The Risca Male Voice Choir and the Bath Brass Band, together with many local choirs and musical acts, are also regular performers.

The venue has a modern bar and foyer, with room to accommodate the audience before a show and during the interval. There is also an adjoining kitchen, two green rooms beneath the stage, with additional space to store costumes and props, and dressing rooms with

access to the backstage area.

Over the years, much has been updated in the hall and on the stage. The latest improvements include the updating of the audio system and stage lighting, both of which have been completely overhauled and modernized.

This is a great venue for all performers, from jazz trios to band concerts, solo singers to musical theatre, one act plays to drama groups. More information can be found on the Saltford Drama Club website or by calling the booking office on 01225 874081. ★

Keith Richards



regional roundup Wales & Ireland

Wales & Ireland Committee

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

Regional Secretary
Jackie Tittley
01492 870205
jackie.tittley@noda.org.uk

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

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

Youth Advisor
Claire Barnett
01639 885109
claire.barnett@noda.org.uk

Wales & Ireland Districts & Representatives

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

DISTRICT 1A
Jackie Tittley
01686 650955
jackie.tittley@noda.org.uk

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

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

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

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

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

DISTRICT 7
Martin Woodford
01633 668061
martin.woodford@noda.org.uk



Wales and Ireland Regional Committee

Councillor's Comments

Greetings to everyone in the Wales and Ireland region.

As I approach the end of my first year as Councillor I look back on a year in which we presented two workshops for young people. These were well attended and drew very positive reactions from all who attended. We are now in the process of organising a workshop for adults, to be held in Swansea. I would very much like to see a workshop held in each of our eight districts at some point.

Our AGM and Awards Ceremony was a great success at Hereford, and it was surprising to note that there was an increase in the number of nominations for drama productions; a step in the right direction. We have also had an excellent workshop on stage combat presented by True Edge and I am sure that those who attended benefited greatly.

It was also very pleasing to welcome our very own Derek Grattidge in his capacity as National President of NODA, together with his wife

Connie who has given him such loyal support over the years.

Since taking on the mantle of Regional Councillor I have attended a wide variety of performances and have thoroughly enjoyed meeting our members. I look forward to meeting many more of you as the year progresses.

On behalf of my merry band of reps, can I ask you to give them greater notice of your productions so that they can arrange their diaries. Some societies contact their respective representative and expect them to attend a production the same evening, and complain if they are unable to make it. Please remember that they are volunteers and need notice of the event.

As we leave summer behind may I wish you all a busy and productive season.

Hwyl fawr,

Brian Sullivan
Councillor, NODA Wales and Ireland



Scene from
Stars Musical
Theatre Group's
production of
Into the Woods

New Theatre Group for Region

We're happy to welcome Stars Musical Theatre Group to our region. Their recent production of *Into the Woods* was a great success, led by Artistic Director Anthony Argyle and Musical Director Ashley Wilkes. We look forward to many more productions from these new NODA members.

NODA Wales & Ireland Regional Awards 2012

Best Production

Crazy for You by Neath Amateur Operatic Society

Best Individual Performance

Rebecca Bull in *Aida*, by Ebbw Vale and District Operatic Society

Best Supporting Performance

Joyce Harding as 'Grandmother' in *Haywire*, by Briton Ferry Little Theatre

Best Youth Production

Whistle Down the Wind by Abergavenny Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society



NODA Wales & Ireland Poster and Programme Competition 2012

Poster Competition

Winner: Abergavenny Pantomime Company for *Peter Pan*

Souvenir Deluxe Programme

Winner: Londonderry Musical Society for *The King and I*

Standard Programme

Winner: Abergavenny Pantomime Company for *Peter Pan*

Basic Programme

Winner: Briton Ferry Little Theatre for *Hello, Is There Anybody There?*

Market Hall in Brynmawr Saved From Closure

The Market Hall Cinema in Brynmawr, where Brynmawr Operatic Society perform, was due to close after their last successful production of *Sugar* in March 2013. Brynmawr OS was founded in 1957 and had performed at the Market Hall since 1958, and therefore has a long association with the venue.

Blaenau Gwent Borough Council had initially decided to withdraw funding for the Market Hall, which was also used as a cinema, because of lower than expected funding from the Welsh government and because the building also needed extensive upgrading.

However, the Society has now received the good news that their venue is to be saved, thanks to the efforts of so many people who campaigned to keep the venue in the centre of Brynmawr open, and with the help of the local council, who ensured a business plan was in place to retain Market Hall as a privately owned leisure facility.

Sugar, Brynmawr OS's most recent production at Market Hall, was directed by John Roberts, who is now taking some well earned time out. John also directed Brynmawr OS's NODA

Brynmawr OS's recent production of *Sugar*



award-winning production of *Godspell*. At the NODA Wales and Ireland Regional Awards in May 2012, *Godspell* was awarded the prize for best production and the Grattidge Trophy for best performer was presented to Brynmawr OS member Jason Price for his portrayal of Jesus in *Godspell*.

Director Pat Evans will now direct their next show at Brynmawr Market Hall in 2014: the ever popular *Guys and Dolls*! ★

NODA Youth Workshop Puts Youngsters Through Their Paces

NODA recently sponsored a very successful one day Youth Workshop in Criccieth, North Wales, for 32 youngsters aged between 11 and 18 years, with many students attending the workshop from rural societies.

The workshop was held by professional actress and rock choir tutor Kathryn Douglas, who has a wealth of West End experience, and was supported by drama student Ben Tooth. Kathryn soon put the students through their paces, first by introducing games designed for the students to get to know one another, followed by singing and voice projection methods, and breathing exercises.

The students tackled two musical numbers and an excerpt from *Matilda*, which they performed later

in the afternoon. This performance demonstrated the students' rehearsal methods and gave everyone an opportunity to display their talents.

Kathryn made the workshop fun and engaging, and this was appreciated by all who attended. Charlotte from Buttington Musical Theatre Company said: "It was really good to boost my confidence and I would go again." These thoughts were echoed by Michaela from the Children of Benllech Pantomime Group who said it was "really nice to meet people from other drama groups."

Let's do it again and keep the ball rolling! ★

Lyn Emmerson and Jackie Tittley Regional Reps for Wales and Ireland District 1 and 1a

Colstars Youth Theatre Going from Strength to Strength

The Colstars Youth Theatre was originally formed as an offshoot of the Colstars adult company in 2001, when auditions were held to find young people to take the roles of Fagin's gang in a production of *Oliver*. So great was the response and so rich was the talent that it was decided to harness the evident excellence displayed and form a youth wing of the company. Since that time the group has grown in strength to a forty strong troupe today.

Until 2006 the youth group supported the adult company in many ventures, including *The King and I*, *The Sound of Music*, *Blitz* and *Carousel*, and in annual pantomimes and a number of concerts. However, in 2007 it was decided that the group should go it alone under the direction of Derek Williams and Michael Jones. The first venture as a separate youth group was the musical *Carrots*.

In 2008, the production team was joined by Bethan John. Along with Derek and Michael he directed *The Railway Children* in 2008 and *Peter Pan* in 2009. In 2010, the Colstars Youth Theatre staged the successful musical *13* and won the NODA Award for Best Youth Production. They went on to stage *Oklahoma* in 2011 and in 2012 they staged the Welsh premier of musical *Happy Days*, which was nominated for a NODA Award.

In addition to its productions, Colstars Youth Theatre has also supported Peter Karrie in concert on two occasions and has featured in a radio broadcast with Beverly Humphreys on BBC Radio Wales. The group also sing for charity, visit local care homes and have already sung at three weddings this year. In addition, in May 2012 Colstars presented a

cheque for £1,000 to the Mayor of Rhondda Cynon Taf's Appeal Fund. They had raised the money through a charity concert, and after last year's fundraising success they are now in rehearsal for this year's charity concert to raise money for Bobath Wales.

This is a totally voluntary group. Any profits that are made are poured back into providing members with the opportunities to be successful in what they enjoy doing. We give an annual bursary of up to £500 to a member who is pursuing a career in theatre and provide professional workshops in theatre skills, dance, make up and technical skills for our members. ★



Colstars Youth Theatre in action on stage

Notes from your Regional Editor

With your help I would like to feature society histories in NODA publications, so delve into your archives and see what you can find. I am relying on your Secretaries and members to contact me. Remember to include society, date, place and names please. The deadline is the 3rd of every month.

I also welcome your cast profiles and news of any youngsters who are making a career in the performing arts. Let us know about their achievements. Who knows, they could be the famous stars of tomorrow!

Email me at dee.mcilroy@noda.org.uk with the heading NODA Wales and Ireland, including the district, name and society title.

Make sure NODA Wales and Ireland is part of this publication.

Dee Mc Ilroy
Regional Editor and Regional Representative

Follow the lead of the Lighthorne Drama Group and see where a festival can take you



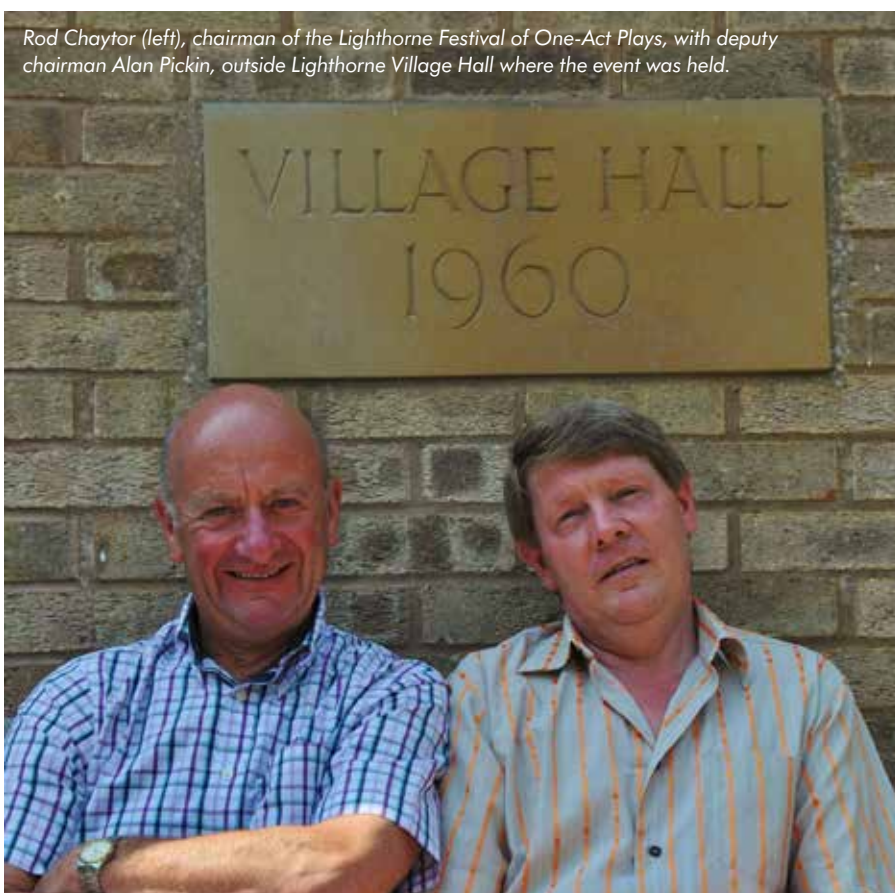
Why don't we organise a festival we'd like to enter?" Those fateful words passed between me and Lighthorne Drama

Group friend Alan Pickin as we left a disappointing event elsewhere. Neither now admits who uttered that sentence, but it was to have an extraordinary outcome three years later.

The Lighthorne Festival of One-Act Plays showcased nine plays over three nights with six top-quality amateur theatre groups quitting their auditoria to perform alongside LDG in an adjudicated and competitive festival in our village hall. The £1,000 net ticket profit, by our rules, was split equally between the winning group and a charity of their choice.

We, I should explain, are a South Warwickshire hamlet of just 150 households, nevertheless blessed with a powerful community spirit and a highly active drama group. We've staged all sorts in our village hall: *Happy Families*, *'Allo 'Allo* and even *Noises Off*. We decided to wait until we performed another blockbuster before inviting the talented amateur theatre groups who surround us to share the 'Lighthorne Experience'.

The opportunity came in May 2012 when we performed *Month of Sundays* in our traditional cafe-style; the audience at candle-lit tables, enjoying their wine and a hot supper during the interval. Although there was some initial reluctance among some invited groups, enthusiasm soon began to grow and we set about organising our first festival. Before long, the Lighthorne Festival of One-Act Plays had become a buzz subject. We were filling a gap and had found a niche. The final piece of the jigsaw was to find an adjudicator, and despite never having previously heard of the Guild of Drama Adjudicators we managed to secure Mike Kaiser of GoDA, who understood the relaxed and informal event we were seeking to create.



Rod Chaytor (left), chairman of the Lighthorne Festival of One-Act Plays, with deputy chairman Alan Pickin, outside Lighthorne Village Hall where the event was held.

Picture by Geoff Mayor.

On the opening night, I walked through the village, still not quite believing it. Inside the hall, committee members smiled, preparing quietly and efficiently. Punters and performers arrived, greeted by pretend paparazzi, and an awning and carpet transformed the approach. Alan ran the backstage activities like clockwork and I nervously stayed front of house.

The performers loved the intimate cafe-theatre, the audience loved the drama and were enthralled by the adjudicator, and the villagers loved hosting the event. It was a sell-out every night. Within hours of the festival finishing our inboxes were filling with messages from people insisting that we put

on the festival again. Overwhelmed, we had no option and fixed a date for the week-ending June 7th, 2014.

A final bonus was that we were embraced by NDFA (National Drama Festivals Association), who run annual All-Winners Finals, for which ours, Caramba, now becomes eligible.

We had successfully founded a now-annual and nationally-recognised festival. If you know a venue that will intrigue and attract amateur theatres, presenting them with a fresh challenge, then you can do the same. ★

Rod Chaytor, Chairman, The Lighthorne Festival of One-Act Plays.

regional roundup

West Midlands



West Midlands Committee

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

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

Regional Treasurer
Michael Hastilow
07968 355101
michael.hastilow@noda.org.uk

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

Web Manager
Vacant, contact Regional Councillor

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

Regional Editor
Vacant contact Regional Councillor

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

Committee Member
John Richards
0121 353 2766
john.richards@noda.org.uk

West Midlands Districts & Representatives

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

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

DISTRICT 3
Wyn Mason
01782 616486
wyn.mason@noda.org.uk

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Councillor's Comments

As I write this on one of the hottest days of the year so far, I start reflecting on achievements, birthdays and celebrations in the West Midlands region. I recently saw Solihull Operatic Society celebrate 20

years in theatre. This was immediately followed by the 75th anniversary of West Bromwich Operatic Society, whose youth theatre also celebrated 25 years in 2012. Contrasting the old with the new, this year Hereford Musical Theatre celebrates a tremendous 115 years in business, whilst new society Phoenix Theatre Co has just been established in Wolverhampton.

Where do all the years go? I look at the Long Service Awards and wonder if I dare consider adding up the years of service they represent. The celebrations take many forms: gala performances, formal dinners and celebratory concerts. Many re-enact their beginnings as a celebration of many years gone by. This year, Rugby Operatic Society performed a concert drawn from G&S and Les Miserables to commemorate 50 years since Barry Woodward suggested to a fellow chorister in St Andrews Church that they 'do a show', leading to the formation of Rugby OS. It was a wonderful and very nostalgic evening.

Then I turn to the youth in our region and find that their vitality, energy and enthusiasm is hard to comprehend; was I ever that active? I recently saw a show performed and stage managed by a company of actors with learning disabilities in

Stourbridge. The company, called Side by Side, has received recognition for the work it does in this field, including The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, and it is a WRVS Diamond Champion. There is a tremendous sense of achievement by all its members and their families.

The same sense of achievement is seen in all youth societies, especially when they are able to learn new skills just for a performance. For example, Spotlight recently performed *Godspell* in a circus where all those on stage were circus performers: juggling, cycling, walking on stilts, spinning plates on sticks and performing acrobatic tricks. In addition, Worcester Operatic Society's youth section was invited to entertain the guests at the Mayor of Worcester's Charity Function at the historic Georgian Guildhall; a real treat for the guests and an honour for the Society. Another success is Pattingham Drama, the youth section of Pattingham Drama Group, a member of which is writing his own shows to be performed in Edinburgh. These are all wonderful achievements for youth groups.

My concern is how we continue to sustain and help develop young talent and celebrate their successes. We have the NODA Summer School, but how can we ensure that there is adequate support for younger members across the UK? Just some food for thought.

Michael Hastilow
Councillor, NODA West Midlands

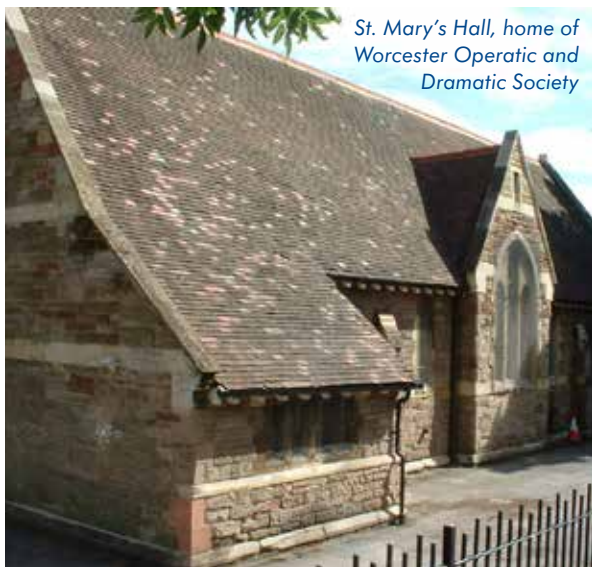
Matt Lim from Pattingham Drama



Councillor Michael Hastilow with Rugby Operatic Society

WODS of Worcester: 120 Years and Counting

In 2012, Worcester Operatic and Dramatic Society celebrated its 120th anniversary, along with the 30th anniversary of its youth section and the purchase of its own rehearsal rooms, all of which it is immensely proud of.



St. Mary's Hall, home of Worcester Operatic and Dramatic Society

A Grade Two listed former church hall, St Mary's Hall has been transformed since it was purchased in 1981. As well as paying off the mortgage in a little over 16 years, WODS has since spent over £30,000 restoring stonework, installing a mezzanine floor to create a wardrobe store, and with grants, adding a new entrance foyer with disabled facilities. In addition to performing three major musicals per year at the local Swan Theatre, WODS built a stage in the hall for the occasional play and concert, seating 100 comfortably.

The Hall plays a major role in the local community, hosting meetings of the local Residents' Association and several other organisations. Whenever possible WODS donates funds to local charities and has done so from almost every production since 1892. Its Youth Group alone has donated over £20,000 to local charities.

WODS prides itself on maintaining a high standard of production and has been the lucky recipient of four NODA Best Production awards since 2003. In addition, it was previously awarded Best Musical at the former Newport International Festival in 1990 and runner up in 1992. ★

Bruce Wyatt
WODS Secretary

Norbury's Golden Anniversary Celebrations

This season the Norbury Theatre, Droitwich Spa, celebrated its Golden Anniversary. It was 50 years ago that a group of enthusiastic amateurs converted the dining room of a five star 1930s hotel into a theatre. Today the building has become flats, but the theatre still occupies part of the ground floor. The facilities have been much improved over the years and as part of the anniversary celebrations the foyer has been completely redecorated in the Art Deco style of its inception. In recent months the small studio theatre has also been treated to a refurbishment.

If it were not for audiences then amateur societies would never survive, so Norbury members

treated their audiences to three gala evenings throughout the season, all complete with drinks and nibbles. Wine and canapés were served at the performance of Agatha Christie's *A Murder is Announced* and *Turkish Delight* was offered at the Youth Theatre's production of *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. In true WI style, those attending the *Calendar Girls* gala night were treated to tea and cakes.

The busy season featured four plays, three musicals and the annual pantomime. Along with hosting a Brass Band Festival, a One



Members of Norbury Theatre celebrating their Golden Anniversary

Act Play Festival, and the LTG (Little Theatre Guild) National Conference, plus a number of outside bookings, you can tell that the season has been a busy and successful one with full houses on many occasions.

The plan for the rest of 2013 is in place and rehearsals are underway for the autumn programme. Here's to the future of this little theatre that was once a hotel! ★

A Crisis Averted - Scene Two

Setting:

In this scene the defendant is being cross examined for violating the Health and Safety Act 1974.

Characters:

Defendant: You
Your Solicitor: NODA Insurance
Prosecutor: Representative from the Health and Safety Executive

Act 1:

Prosecutor: And did you complete the full risk assessment taking into account all eventualities?

Defendant: I believe I did, I completed the form to the best of my ability and I am sorry that someone has been injured. I thought I had everything covered.

Prosecutor: *Turn to face the Judge*
Your Honour. It's clear there has been a breach of Health and Safety in this case. Although the defendant appears an honest person, this should not stand in the way of seeing justice for our client.

Your Solicitor: *Turn to face the Judge*
Your Honour. Our client made every effort to ensure the safety of the actors. This event is purely an accident and not the fault of the defendants. Everything was in order.

A situation like this is stressful enough, without having to worry about the cost of proving your innocence.

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