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and AGM

Summer School roundup

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events in your region

Our new website takes to the stage

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11/17



I am pleased to report that the National AGM and Presidential inauguration of Nick Lawrence at the Marriott Hotel, Bristol was a very enjoyable weekend, with no less than eight NODA Past Presidents attending. The national meeting of Regional Representatives was quite well attended, but it would be good to see all the Regional Representatives attending their national meeting next September.

Jacque Stedman was elected as Vice President, and will be inaugurated as President on 22 September 2018 at the Hilton St Anne's Hotel, Wokingham, so do make a note in your diary now.

I have agreed to continue as Chairman of NODA for a further year to ensure some continuity but will be looking for a successor to be elected at the 2018 National AGM.

Some sad news reached me at the beginning of October, when I was informed that Jack Underwood, Past President had died. Jack was NODA President in 1992-93 and a strong supporter of NODA. You will find an obituary for Jack on page 4.

You should all have had information about the launch of the new website; please read the article later in this magazine for advice and tips on how to make the most of it for your society.

I wish you well with your forthcoming musicals, plays and pantomimes and look forward to reading your regional news. Don't forget to invite your Regional Councillor and Regional Representatives to your productions and give them good notice of the date, time and venue.

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What do you receive for your NODA society membership?

- ★ Members' magazine NODA Today
- ★ Regional news and updates from HQ

Access to members' area of website

- ★ Factsheets, including:
 - ☆ Child protection policy
 - ☆ Performance regulations and copyright
 - ☆ Model constitution
 - ☆ Production team duties
 - ☆ Fundraising
- ★ Show listings online at noda.org.uk

Advice and services

- ★ Discounted rates on NODA insurance
- ★ Legal helpline
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- ★ Performance rights and scripts for pantomimes

Regional support

- ★ Dedicated regional representative
- ★ Regional youth advisor
- ★ Show reports
- ★ Regional social media advertising
- ★ Contact lists for MDs, directors, choreographers etc
- ★ Regional conference, awards and workshops

Training

- ★ NODA Theatre Summer School
- ★ Bursaries for Summer School training

Awards

- ★ National awards ceremony
- ★ Poster and programme competition

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- ★ Royalties discounts from major rightsholders
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Be inspired by amateur theatre

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The Theatrical Traders Association represents all the affiliated traders who supply amateur theatre in the UK. Membership of the TTA means a reputable supplier who maintains the standards set by the Association.

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Look out for the TTA logo. For help with the supply of anything for your productions contact the TTA helpline on 0345 126 0631

www.theatricaltradersassociation.co.uk

Jack Underwood

It was with deep sadness that we learned of the passing of Past President Jack Underwood on Tuesday 3rd October 2017. Jack would have been 92 in December but the onset of dementia and a sudden deterioration of his health meant his final days were spent in Ninewells hospital where he died in the early morning of that Tuesday.

Following early employment with the Scottish Provident Assurance and then with Dundee City Police, Jack's musical talents were released when he joined Broughty Ferry AOS in 1947. It was here that he met his wife to be, Jenny, who was playing the leading role in *Princess Ida*. His clear bass voice would eventually be heard over the years with BFAOS, his church choir and then with the concert party The Ferryatrics once his on-stage days were over.

Jack was first elected as Regional Representative in 1970, serving until 1984 before being elected to Councillor in the September of that year. At the National Conference in Peebles Hydro in 1992 he was installed as President of the Association.

Jack was a popular President and he continued to serve on Council as an elected Life Member until 1998. He continued to support NODA and in particular the Scottish region, by visiting many shows with his wife Jenny who was his constant support until her passing in 2006.

We send our condolences to his son Bruce and daughter Christine and their families at this sad time.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Celebrate your time in amateur theatre with our long service awards



10 years



15 years



20 years



25 years



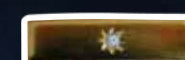
25 years



50 years



55 years



60 years



70 years



Society Life Member

Awards for 30 years, 35 years, 40 years, 45 years and 65 years are also available. Check the website for more information

Download an application form today at noda.org.uk/awards



roundup

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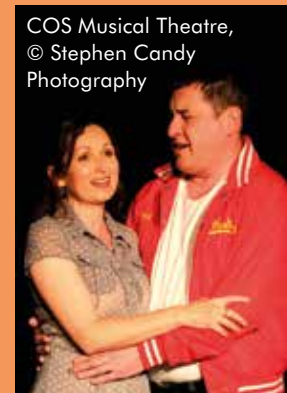
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Don't forget to send us your youth stories – email your news to Jordan!



Dear members,

I had the privilege of being appointed as your Councillor with Responsibility to NODA Youth in August 2017. I also serve as Councillor to the Wales and Ireland region. I have supported Wales

and Ireland's Youth Adviser hugely on our quest to support our young people and ensure, certainly in Wales and Ireland, that they are heard and feel as involved as anyone else within our region.

I currently work as a Youth and Families' Worker for the Church in Wales and Methodist Church. Prior to that I worked at a higher educational institution with over 12,500 students on roll as an Educational Support Adviser. For several years I was a Youth board member for the NSPCC/Childline Services and also served as a Youth Minister for the Welsh Assembly Youth Parliament.

I have been actively involved with child protection and safeguarding. I am also a licensed chaperone and have worked

both in amateur and professional theatre.

In 2016 I was appointed as a Local Authority School Governor and within my role I am currently Governor for Safeguarding and Additional Learning Needs students.

I am delighted to be appointed as Councillor with Responsibility to NODA Youth because I am passionate about young people and how we can support them as an organisation. I believe our young people are tomorrow's NODA today and without them our organisation will certainly shrink in years to come. I am positive that between us we can strive to enhance our service to our young members and build on the foundations which have been put in place previously.

As your Councillor I am here to support and advise the Youth Advisers. Should you need advice regarding policies or for any other questions or queries that you may have regarding children and young people you should contact your Youth Adviser in the first instance. ★

Jordan Hill

Calder Valley Youth Theatre Memories

The highlight of my youth performances was playing Dorothy, but I only have one rather faded photo taken in the rehearsal hall as the local newspaper photographer managed to cut me out of the main publicity shot completely, although captured my sister who was a munchkin!

So, I was blown away by a twister of some proportion when I went to the Calder Valley Youth Theatre production of *The Wiz* at Halifax Playhouse. Their publicity and programme

photography was amazing. The photographer, David Mitchell of DM07 images, shared some of his back catalogue with me and *The Wiz* wasn't a one off. Well done to David and the costume team for making the images wonderful and to the whole production team for helping to create such a fabulous visual record. Special congratulations to the young people of Calder Valley Youth Theatre whose performances matched up to the amazing publicity shots! ★

Jo Sykes



Youth members keep COS Musical Theatre running

This year COS Musical Theatre is celebrating its 60th anniversary. Helen Heppell tells us about how important their youth members have been in keeping the society running.



"We have always been encouraging and supportive within the community and believe it really important to embrace the new young performers that are coming through. If we didn't have the youth, COS would not still be going today. It's so important for self-confidence, creativity, team building, and friendship, amongst other skills, that musical theatre can continue giving them these opportunities.

We have a 12 strong cast of kids performing in our Centre Stage Diamond Edition (60th Anniversary show) which has some great group and solo numbers to showcase the talent of the next generation.

COS also put on a Pantomime every January and we are so proud of our 26 kid-strong ensemble. It is getting so hard to cast

Farewell from the Youth Adviser for Scotland

It has been an honour to have held the position of NODA Youth Adviser for Scotland for almost five years.

There have been many highlights during this journey, but the main one for me was having the opportunity to attend productions presented by many youth theatre societies across Scotland. Not only to witness such a high level of performances from our talented members, but also getting the chance to speak with lots of admin team and committee members, casts and family helpers.

I also held a 'Big Brainstorming Youth Forum' to bring different societies together to share ideas, create new connections between clubs and find out more from the members about what they like already and would like to see from NODA. Leading on from this I have worked with a local company to create a workshop focusing on confidence building, acting and

characterisation – something that was requested from the forum feedback. This will kick off at the end of 2017 and then roll out across all the regions within Scotland over the next year.

I also had the pleasure of presenting NODA long service and societies' own commitment awards to youth members of some societies, and their adult off stage helpers. It was encouraging to see that some youth members had accumulated 10 years committed service to the one society. All lovely and merited successes.

Overall the experience in this role has exceeded my expectations and as I change post to become a Regional Representative I look forward to supporting the new Youth Adviser in continuing to encourage and care for the family of NODA Youth in Scotland. ★

Craig Inglis



North West Youth Day

North West District 8 was thrilled to deliver the recent NODA Youth Workshop on August 5th. The workshop was very well attended with young people coming from societies within the District. The workshops were provided by Ben Ireson, Jill Mason, Debs Stoke and Debbie Carpenter, covering a review of *Oliver*, *Les Misérables* and *Hairspray*. The standard of the workshops catered for the ability of each child in attendance and great care was taken to ensure everyone's involvement. It was truly inspirational to watch each tutor work with the children and in turn to see the children all work as a team.

We were very fortunate to also have a great musical director in Mike Richardson, who polished the vocal requirements for the day, he also created great tracks to add excitement and to give the final performance the "wow" effect.

The running of the afternoon was well executed by a great team of District 8 matrons and chaperones who ensured that the welfare of the children was always taken care of. Both Jenny King, Youth Rep and Louise Colohan, District 8 Rep were delighted with the outcome of the afternoon and will look to hold future workshops where possible as the demand was evident.

The day ended with a performance by the children for their parents, the performance was exceptional and the audience were in awe of the standard of each piece. The children fully embraced the day and took so much away; stage skills, learning methods, vocal care and technique, and most of all new friends. ★

Read on for more youth news in the regions

regionalroundup East

Brian 'Tommy' Thomas: A Musical Celebration

Festival Players past and present gathered at Ashburton Hall, St Faith's School, Cambridge, on Saturday 30th September to celebrate the contribution of Brian 'Tommy' Thomas, as he steps down as the society's musical director, after more than 40 years.

From *The Arcadians* (1973) to *Legally Blonde* (2016), Tommy has been the musical driving force behind no fewer than 54 productions for Festival Players (and more than 120 productions for Cambridge-based societies as a whole).

The celebration event featured Festival Players from many of those shows, performing a hand-picked selection of Tommy's favourite numbers, as well as a specially-choreographed interpretation of *Harlequinade*, an orchestral suite written by Tommy. Interspersed throughout were tributes, memories and anecdotes from friends old and

new, including messages from those unable to make the evening itself.

The final number of the night saw Tommy lift his baton for the last time, as he led the ensemble through his own arrangement of the Disney classic, *When You Wish Upon A Star*.

Tommy's wife Linda presented him with a very special celebration cake, praising his 'patience, encouragement and dependability'. The committee also gifted him a photograph book, featuring pictures from almost all of his 54 productions, put together by Suzanne Emerson and Matt Gregory.

Audience and performers then raised a toast to Tommy to thank him for his inspiration, dedication, support and talent during his 43 years at the helm. ★

Warren Mitchell
Chair Festival Players



Read about
another
very special
anniversary in
the South East
roundup on
pages 26-27

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Young NOMADS 24 Hour Concert

When the Young NOMADS from Newmarket decided that their autumn production would be the botanical feast of entertainment that is *Little Shop of Horrors*, they faced the challenge that many amateur societies putting this on production experience – how exactly to get the money needed to buy/hire the numerous versions of the plant. They knew they had to fund-raise but the question was how?

So, the adults and youth section decided to produce a variety show in the summer holidays. A variety show with a twist; the whole thing would be put together in just 24 hours!

This meant that the cast of 20 young people arrived at 7:30pm on the Sunday for their first production team meeting to decide on everything needed for the show - from what pieces could be performed, to what the running order would be, and of course agreeing who would actually be performing what!

Once that piece of democracy in action was complete, they were onto the small task of learning all of the songs, choreographing and learning every number, and then putting it all together with lighting, sound and props!

What the young people came up with

was a diverse range of entertainment to suit all tastes – from comedy sketches, to contemporary dance routines to famous numbers from classic musicals such as *Les Miserables*, as well as more recent box office hits such as *Kinky Boots*.

The under 16s had to leave at 11pm because of the performance license, so it was down to the older youth members to work through the night, practicing their pieces (there's nothing quite like seeing a contemporary dance piece being choreographed at 3:45 in the morning!), learning their lines and doing all of the extra things that were needed like putting together the programme.

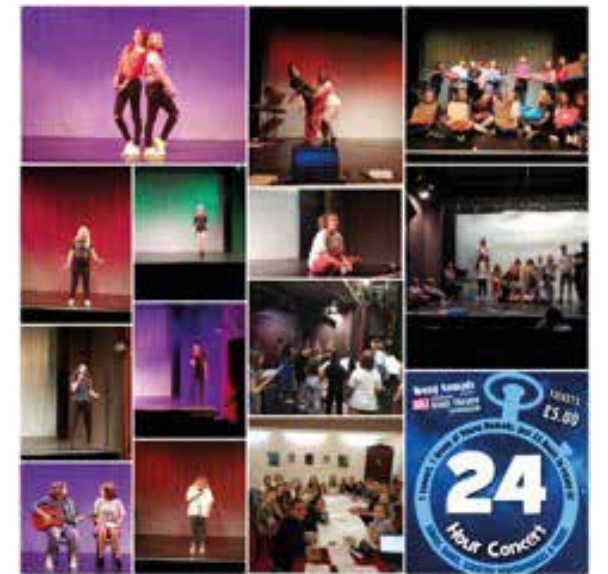
And of course, to keep energy levels high, there were the compulsory party dance routines every hour (anyone for the Macarena or Cha Cha Slide?)

The half-way point production meeting was accompanied by breakfast, and then it was back to rehearsals until the younger members re-joined after lunch. They didn't come back empty-handed though, instead bringing in countless baked goods ready for the Young NOMADS bake-off, which featured

everything from flapjack, to cookies to a unicorn cake!

By 7:10pm the dress rehearsal was done ready for the paying public to come in just five minutes later culminating in a full performance which combined with the bake-off and the raffle raised over £550.

Co-producer, Andy McGowan said "When I came up with the idea of a 24 hour concert, I had no idea whether it would even be possible, let alone whether people would come! But the support from the family and friends of the cast and the wider community provided us with an electric atmosphere which the young people thrived off – even if they were rather sleep-deprived! By far, the best part about the event was that it was all led by the young people and it really was their show." ★



A Tribute to Sir Peter Hall

The eminent director of plays, opera and films died on September 11th 2017 aged 86. Sir Peter was born and lived in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, where his father, Reg. worked for the railway. The family subsequently moved to Cambridge where Peter later attended the University, and started his theatre directing career.

Bury St Edmunds Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society (BSEAODS) can claim a unique connection with this outstanding theatrical figure. His father, Reg. was a member in the mid-1920s and appeared in the Society's last production in the Theatre Royal (before closure by its owners, Greene King, when it became a barrel store, which was re-opened and restored 1965), and the first in The Playhouse in Buttermarket in the centre of town, then a cinema with a stage. His father also had a cameo role as the village policeman in Sir Peter's poetic film of Suffolk rural life, *Akenfield*, (1975). Sir Peter was also greatly involved with the latest restoration (2005/7) of our beautiful home, the Theatre Royal – the only working Regency theatre (1819) in the UK – giving advice and as President of the Restoration Fund Appeal.

On the occasion of BSEAODS Centenary in 2003, Sir Peter kindly sent us a congratulatory letter which recognised the family connection with the Society. ★

Joan Abbs
Archivist for BSEAODS



Reg Hall (right) as Giuseppe in *The Gondoliers* 1924. Photo by H.I.Jarman



regionalroundup East Midlands

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oldIES' Tribute to an Old Friend

Jonathan Reynolds tells how NODA members past and present raised the roof to honour an old friend.

The Masque Theatre in Barton Seagrave, Northamptonshire, was the venue for a special compilation show performed on Sunday October 1st. A tribute to the stage career of Paul Aucott, who passed away earlier this year, 'oldIES' brought back together former members of IES. The IES group were one of Northamptonshire's leading musical theatre groups for many years until its sad demise 10 years ago.

Paul, a former NODA Representative, will always be remembered as an inspirational and innovative director who 'raised the bar' for amateur societies from the 1970s through to the early noughties. Many remember with great fondness his wonderful productions of *Cabaret*, *West Side Story*, *The Hires Man*, *MAME* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* to name but a few. On stage Paul was a consummate performer and will be long remembered in roles such as Professor Higgins in *My Fair Lady*, Judge Turpin in Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*, Harry Chitterlow in *Half a Sixpence* and as Chief Tee Ah Millatoona in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

The 'oldIES' cast included 21 former IES members some of whom had not been on stage for over two decades but who rolled back the years and produced wonderful performances which wowed the full auditorium. Four of the cast were offspring of IES members giving the show an age range of 15—83!

The production team of Jonathan Reynolds (Producer), Barry Currall (Director), Daryl Handy (Choreographer) and Musical Director Kaye Tompkins had all worked with Paul on many occasions and were delighted to be putting the show together. The atmosphere during rehearsals was superb, and the fun and laughter left the younger members a little shell-shocked. Amongst the many glowing reviews was from the one from BBC Radio Northampton who described it as "A West End quality show at The Masque Theatre".

All profits from the 'oldIES' production will be donated to Prostate Cancer UK and, although the accounts are not yet complete, it is estimated that the total raised will be in the region of £1,400. ★



What's a Youth Production?

Under 16s, under 18s, under 21s?
Amanda Hall, NODA East Midlands Youth Advisor, asks about how we define 'youth groups'.

Recently the NODA East Midlands Regional Committee has been discussing our youth organisations across the region.

Over the past few years I have been invited to many youth productions and have seen a wide variety of shows encompassing a huge age range and ability. But what age constitutes a youth production? We have seen some licensees putting upper age limits on many specific youth shows, but these vary from 14 years to 19 years and even older.

There is also now a huge selection of junior/youth and part/schools edition shows available, some of these are very much for the junior age and others more for teenagers. Then there are the full shows like *Fame* which are aimed at the oldest of our youth/adult companies. There are also some major titles like *Billy Elliott* and now *Mary Poppins* that are only available to academic schools; a few schools in our region are NODA members and are therefore considered for awards with shows that are not generally available to other youth groups. If a youth company wants to do *Oklahoma* or *My Fair Lady* there are obviously no age limits. University groups are growing strongly and often direct, design & produce the whole thing, but are they considered youth or adult?

Into the Woods LEOS Juniors

"This was a wonderful production, bursting with energy and enthusiasm. It was such a pleasure to see so many talented performers with lots of small parts being done well, and a most effective dance troupe, each and every one should be proud of their performance."

Keith Scott-Savage (District 1 Representative) writing about Long Eaton Operatic Society's 2017 production of *Into the Woods* (Junior)



In the dark, distant past when I was a youth performer we would include adults to play the older roles, but we were still definitely producing youth shows.

For the purposes of our awards how do we compare such a variety of shows?

Youth theatre is changing and we have to change with it. It's always fantastic to see any child perform and grow in confidence and ability, but we have to find a better way to compare the performances with all the limitations put on the society and our NODA Representatives.

The NODA EM Committee would like to provide improved guidelines for Youth Groups & Organisations and we would welcome your feedback. If you have any comments or suggestions please contact Amanda Hall at amanda.hall@noda.org.uk

And please remember I would love to come and visit your youth group, maybe during a rehearsal where we would have the chance to chat and find out more about how things are working for you. ★

Smike Presentation (Langtoft Junior Players)

A member of Langtoft Junior Players receives the District 5 Youth Award from NODA President Michael Hastilow for their 2016 production of *Smike*.



"... the boundless energy, good humour, dedication and commitment of this young cast and the patience of the Producer and Director resulted in their delivering a most impressive performance which I am sure they will remember for many years to come."

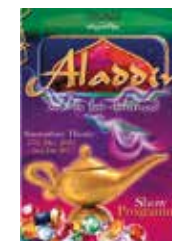
District 5 Representative, Peter Breach writes about *Smike*. ★

AND THE WINNERS ARE...



Grantham Dramatic Society were awarded the Barnes Trophy for their *The Vicar of Dibley* programme as winner of the Basic Class of the National Poster and Programme Competition 2016.

Milton Keynes Amateur Operatic Society were awarded the Ralph Whittaker Trophy for their *Aladdin* programme, as runner up in the De-Luxe Class of the competition.



The trophies were presented at the National NODA AGM in Bristol on 23rd September, 2017. ★

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY – EAST MIDLANDS AGM AND AWARDS DAY – LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN HALL THEATRE ON SUNDAY 10TH JUNE 2018!

regionalroundup London

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Councillor's Comments

The NODA Presidential Gala and AGM in Bristol at the end of September saw Nick Lawrence happily installed as National President and myself as Vice President. NODA London has not had a National President for 25 years so next September I will take on the role of President with some trepidation. Because this is a self-nominated role on which the Council then votes (should more than one person put their name forward) it has taken me twelve years as Councillor to feel ready for this role, and to know that the London Region is in a good state to hand over to someone new.

Congratulations to Nick, from all of us in London, on his appointment – the Regional Committee and I look forward to welcoming him to the London Festival Weekend in June and supporting him during his presidential year, as he represents the Association at home and abroad. Nick has been a keen supporter of NODA Theatre Summer School, as a student, for many years so if you invite him to your show you can expect him to wax lyrical about all the benefits – which will make a change from me doing that very same thing. ★

Jacquie Stedman
Councillor – NODA London
National Vice-President



Read all about
Summer School
2017 in our
special feature
on pages 16-17



New Representatives

We are delighted to now have a full complement of Regional Representatives in the London area with the recent appointment of Phil Wilcox in District 5 and Des Wilby for District 3.



Des Wilby

Following a last minute plea for help, Des first became involved in amateur dramatics via a local musical society. As it turned out, he found the whole

experience to have been great and quickly signed-up for their next show. Over time Des developed an interest in acting and eventually auditioned for, and was cast as, the U-Boat Captain in *Dads Army*. Today he is a member of Worcester Park Dramatic Society and still greatly enjoys performing on stage.

Des says "Every society I have been involved with has been an active NODA member and the support they've received has been both valued and appreciated. I feel fortunate to have had a great introduction to the role of a Regional Representative by attending two excellent shows already. I look forward to visiting all remaining societies in London Region, District 3, over the coming weeks, and beginning a lasting relationship!"



Phil Wilcox

This year, Phil celebrates half a century of stage appearances. During that time he estimates he has notched up over 200 productions and countless appearances in musical theatre, music hall, revues and drama. A retired journalist, he has written well-received shows which have been put on at Epsom Playhouse and the Ashcroft Theatre in Croydon. Starting in operetta with Wimbledon Light Opera Society, where he met his

wife Jane, a fellow thespian, he has now come full circle. These days he is likely to be seen performing a stone's throw away at that theatre's sister venue, the Wimbledon Studio Theatre, with Carlton Theatre Group, where he is vice chair. Earlier this year, he was delighted to receive a runner's up award as Best Actor in a Supporting Role at the Bromley Theatre Guild's Full Length Play Competition as CSM Rivers in *The Accrington Pals*. Now he feels it is time to pay something back for all those memorable roles he has played - from Daddy Warbucks to Laurie Lee - by becoming a NODA Representative. He is thoroughly looking forward to his new venture, and adds that he has only one unfulfilled theatrical ambition: to appear in a production at the end of a pier. Any offers? ★

Groups Benefit From Grant

Two London groups recently took advantage of the training grant awarded by NODA London to help run workshops.

Julian Light Opera Company held a drama workshop in April directed by Fraser Grant, a professional director who has been working with the group for many years.

And in July Proscenium Theatre Company hosted a workshop: An Actor's Guide To Exploring Shakespeare's Tragedies, also welcoming members of NODA affiliates Belmont Theatre Company and East Lane Theatre Company. The workshop was most ably led by Joe Arkley who has performed in numerous Royal Shakespeare Company productions at Stratford-Upon-Avon and whose most recent Shakespeare role was in *Richard III* at the Almeida Theatre.

If your group is thinking of running a workshop of some kind please contact Jacquie Stedman and, if you can submit a copy of your budget, we may be able to assist with the finances. The two conditions are that you mention that the workshop is supported by NODA London and is open to members of other NODA groups in your district, and that you write a piece for this magazine. ★





regionalroundup North

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Councillor's Chat

Welcome to my last 'chat' of the year – where has this year gone? – it started with what seemed like every show I saw being a pantomime and will probably end in the same manner. However, a lot has been packed into the year with our National President Michael Hastilow and his daughter Janine joining us for our regional conference and (at the time of writing) heading off to Bristol to see new president Nick Lawrence inaugurated into the position. Regionally I've seen some wonderful performances, made new friends, gained new societies and sadly lost one or two along the way through folding.

I've managed to fit in a couple of performances on stage and am about to start in directing a play this autumn. I've been invited to a couple of special birthday celebrations – Park Productions 25 years and Alnwick SMS 30 years – the latter being in the superb Olympic suite of the Swan hotel in the town, so named because it is decked out in the reclaimed panels from the 1st class passenger accommodation from Titanic's sister ship the Olympic. More on both those celebrations later.

On the 16th and 17th September my regional committee hosted our annual Awards evening (pictured bottom right) in our new venue, the Gosforth Park Hotel, which saw societies and individuals recognised for their 'above and beyond' performances to the public over the year. In a long evening, which started with a standing ovation and one minute applause for two members who passed away this year in tragic circumstances, Chloe Rutherford of Newcastle MTC and Val Barnes of Southmoor society, several awards were handed out by regional representatives. The evening culminated in the Councillors' awards and the 'Joyce Lonsdale' bowl for the 'unsung hero' – fittingly awarded to Ken Martin for his contributions to theatre over 50 years.

What will 2018 bring? Keep watching out for NODA Today, following us on Facebook and Twitter and visiting our new website. ★

Gordon Richardson
Regional Councillor

Find out all about the 2017 National AGM and Presidential Gala in our special feature on pages 18-19

Congratulations Park Productions; 25 years of entertainment.

In 1992, several like-minded people were approached by Suzy Wake to come together to perform a concert, *A Musical Extravaganza*, in Park Road Church Hall, to raise money to enable Suzy to travel to Scandinavia with the gospel group The Continentals. Following the concert and tour, the group decided to stay together to raise money for the church, and so evolved Park Road Productions.

In 1996 the Society undertook a major change both in its name and venue; due to the closure of Park Road Church, the society re-located to Burn Park Church and became Park Productions, and this continues to be their home to this day. Park Productions, over their existence, have performed many productions including pantomimes, music hall productions, Gilbert and Sullivan Operettas, concerts and several religious musicals by Roger Jones. The society also takes their charitable responsibility seriously and have

raised money not only for the church but for many charities locally and nationally.

Over the 25 years, despite many challenges, Park Productions have always endeavoured to deliver some remarkable performances and to mark their special year former and new members are holding a special anniversary concert which features songs from previously performed shows and new shows. Congratulations from all your NODA North family. ★



Alnwick Stage Musical Society Celebrates its 30th Anniversary

"Thirty Glorious Years!"

It all began over 30 years ago when local solicitor Norman Luke and civil servant Paul Toward decided that Alnwick should have a stage musical society and so, apparently, did those who turned up to an initial meeting at a local restaurant in Alnwick in the autumn of 1986. Out of that meeting, the society was formed and the first production - *The Sound of Music* saw the light of day in March 1987 and was a resounding success!

Since then the society has gone from strength to strength and has performed many popular musicals including, *Oklahoma!*, *Me & My Girl*, *The Pirates of Penzance* (Broadway version), *Kiss Me Kate*, *HMS Pinafore*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Annie Get Your Gun*. As well as the main show in March at Alnwick Playhouse, the society has occasionally put on a summer show consisting of concert-style performances of excerpts from musicals, *Musicals and Memories* or smaller scale shows like *Nunsense*

which was performed in July 1999 and also, by popular demand, in 2000!

The Society celebrated its 30th anniversary this year with a sell-out production of Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Evita* to be followed next year with a new production of that evergreen musical *My Fair Lady*.

An amazing evening of entertainment and celebration took place on September 9th to mark the 30 years, where honoured guests were Norman Luke and Paul Toward who founded the society. Teresa McQuillen who played 'Maria' and Margaret Reece were also present and they are the two surviving members who were in the very first production and still perform on stage today. Anthony Stoker also attended and holds the record for performing the most shows with the society.

A superb evening was hosted by two of the youngest and newest members Kellie Hughes and Leonie Dial who also performed a superb musical rendition to celebrate the continuing success of the company.

As a footnote to this article, the following Saturday Alnwick scooped up several awards and nominations for the production *Evita* including district 9 best musical production and the Councillors' Cup for best production in the region. ★



Photos by permission of Signature Times Photography.



Councillor's Shield winner Rebecca Charlton and nominees Erin Atack and Lucy McCabe



Reaction of the night, IYFTS for Rent



Perhaps our youngest winner, Bayley Fowler

All change at NODA Theatre Summer School!



As you will have read, this year NODA Theatre Summer School moved home! August 2017 saw us at Yarnfield Park Conference Centre in Stone, Staffordshire where 213 students, across 14 courses, enjoyed a residential week of pure theatrical pleasure, learning from the best in the business.

Moving is never easy, especially after six years in your previous residence, but we all rose to the challenge and embraced the change. NODA Theatre Summer School is a unique event and I think the staff at Yarnfield were rather overwhelmed, initially, when about 220 people left the school meeting on

Saturday afternoon and went straight to the bar – all wanting a drink - at the same time!

However, nearly all the glitches worked themselves out by the end of the week – we had a tremendous sharing of a week's worth of work followed by the 'Wicked' party... so much green, but such fun!

This was also the time we said 'farewell' to our Summer School Director, Catriona Cumming, who has been with us man and boy – or should I say Tutor and Director - for twenty years. Over that period she has been instrumental in improving the quality of Summer School to what it is today. She has been inspirational, encouraging, innovative, and brave....and loved by each and every one of the students, tutors and staff. So it was right and proper that she got the best send-off we could

give her, with a special song, written by the 'Making a Musical' course which the entire School rehearsed and sang to her at the end of the presentations... pass the tissues please!

Although we were all very sorry to see Tri leave, we have to look upon this as an opportunity and we have a very worthy successor to her in Sarah Osbourne – whom many of you will know either through Summer School or because you have attended one of her workshops in the regions. She assures me she is delighted and excited to have been appointed, and looks forward with great enthusiasm to Summer School 2018 – where we all hope we will see friends old and new. ★

Jacqui Stedman
Chairman
NODA Theatre Summer School 2018

Sarah Osbourne announced as new Summer School director

"It was one of those moments where everything goes a little hazy. I knew my name had just been announced as the new Summer School Director, I knew I was stood in front of the wonderful students and amazing tutors of NODA Theatre Summer School 2017 but I couldn't quite take it all in. Not the best reaction from someone about to take the reins of something so valuable.

Luckily I got a grip and managed to say how honoured I was to have been given the position – which I am, how humbled I was to be stepping into the dauntingly excellent Tri Cumming's role – which I am... and how excited I am at the prospect of assisting the Summer School as it sails into its next adventure.

Six weeks down the line I am happy to confirm that I am still just as excited and as I prepare to go to my first planning meeting since taking over the role, my head is buzzing with possibilities and potential plans. My ultimate promise however is this... that I will do my utmost best to care and nurture something that is so loved by so many. Hope to see lots of you in 2018!" ★

Sarah Osbourne
Summer School Director



Photos by kind permission of Barry Hall

Summer School Visitors' Day

For the first time this year Summer School opened its doors not only to Regional Representatives but also NODA members for the Wednesday Visitors' Day.

22 visitors took part in two workshops aided by a couple of the school's tutors, and as part of our visit we spent the afternoon looking in on a few of the, by then, well-established classes.

Many of us attending this year were also at last year's Visitors' Day, where we found ourselves singing and taking part in drama-focused ice breaker games. These activities quickly turned a group of strangers into comrades and introduced us to our own mini bubble.

Under the masterful tutorage of Michael Corbidge, of the RSC, and Musical Director Andrew Nicol, we were put through our paces again. Within moments of starting we lost our newbie nerves and were having a jolly good go at Shakespeare's *Sonnet 99* and the harmonies of Sondheim's *Sunday from Sunday in the Park with George*, in what was a very relaxed and open learning environment.

We laughed, we made mistakes (none of which mattered) and we had fun as we explored and discovered. We learned about, not just the piece, but ourselves too. In essence we were experiencing a raw, slightly abridged Summer School and the safe bubble of learning which meant we could comfortably view and experience classes ourselves during the afternoon.

Here's what some of my fellow visitors had to say:

Judy McMurray – North East
"I had a wonderful day. Taking part in the Shakespeare mini workshop working on *Sonnet 99* with Michael Corbidge was incredible. *Sunday in the Park with George* by Sondheim was hard to sing, but sounded amazing. I will definitely be back next year. Thanks to the tutors and NODA team for all their hard work."



Chris Clarke – East Midlands – The Tin Hatters

"Having provided finance for one of our members to attend Summer School, it was time to see what went on. I was very pleased to see the excellence of the tutors and content of the courses."

Tony Harris – North East

"The whole day was brilliant, the quality of tuition was superb and students responded accordingly."

Robin Kelly – London

"Interesting and informative, an opportunity which needs to be followed up by a number of groups and individuals I can think of!"



Heather Gallagher – West Midlands

"Visitors' Day was a brilliant idea, as a Summer School student for many years it gave me an invaluable insight to other classes that are on offer."

Nova Horley – East

"My first time at Summer School as a visitor, it surpassed my expectations. The sheer scale of commitment from the committee and delegates underpinned our enthusiasm for our shared passion. A super insightful day."

Nanette Lovell – Councillor for the East Midlands

"I thought the day went extremely well. Councillors should encourage their committee members to attend - if you haven't been to Summer School to see what it is all about you cannot really publicise it to NODA members."

Christine Castle – North East

"I thoroughly enjoyed our visit to Yarnfield, the perfect location for the School, and I hope everyone felt the same. We all enjoyed the way the day was organised for us – and the food was excellent!"

So why don't you try it yourself next year as a visitor or even as a student? ★

Janine Graeme
NODA WM Regional Editor

Summer School Bursary

The 2018 NODA Theatre Summer School launches at 9pm on the 1st December! If you have never been before, perhaps now is the time to think about it, so you'll be ready when we announce the courses on our website in mid-November. But, did you know that you can apply for a national bursary of £300 to attend the course of your choice? When you complete the application form please look at the bursary application form too and if you are a newbie to Summer School consider applying. Perhaps you could ask your society if they can support you in some way - maybe paying the cost of your travel – to enable you to have one of the best experiences of your theatrical life. I look forward to seeing you at Yarnfield Park. ★

Jacqui Stedman

National AGM 2017 – Having a ball at the Presidential Gala

On 23rd September 2017 the Marriott Hotel in Bristol was buzzing with thespians from across the country as delegates and members joined us for the 2017 Annual General Meeting and Presidential Gala.

Entrances and exits

John Barnes was elected as Chairman of Trustees for the coming year and we thanked him heartily.

We welcomed four new Councillors to the table; Jordan Hill for Wales & Ireland, Stuart McCue-Dick for Scotland, Les Smith for North East and Graham Liverton for South West, and we said au revoir to Chris Ingram. Chris retired after many years of service as Regional Representative, Councillor, Chairman of Trustees, Past President & Life Member.

A huge 'thank you' was given to Janine Graeme who not only served as a very agreeable Consort to the President, but also edited two editions of NODA Today during the year. Her enthusiasm and determination saw the magazines produced on time and we were very grateful to her for putting on her Editor's hat to help us out.

Michael Hastilow regaled us all with a report on his year as President and thanked members for the kind hospitality offered to him on his travels. Then, Nick Lawrence and Jacquie Stedman were inaugurated as President and Vice-President for 2017-18. We were lucky enough to be joined by eight Past Presidents, making a fabulous chorus line for Nick!

We were also joined by Colm Moules, the President of our sister organisation, the Association of Musical Societies (AIMS) in Ireland. Colm spoke generously about the positive relations between our organisations and we were very pleased to welcome him to our AGM. ★

Hello CIO!

In the last few months NODA has become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The afternoon of Saturday 23rd September saw the final AGM of NODA as an Association. Michael Hastilow and John Barnes reported on the winding up of the Association and the surplus over the last 16 months; a favourable outcome!

So we said goodbye to the Association and immediately held the first AGM of NODA as a CIO. ★



Past President Michael Hastilow and new President Nick Lawrence



Past President Michael Hastilow and new Vice President Jacquie Stedman



President Nick Lawrence and his family



Members of WOW Musical Theatre



Members of WOW Musical Theatre



President Nick Lawrence and Ashleigh Bentham from the Sunderland Theatre Company



President Nick Lawrence with the company of WOW Musical Theatre

WOW – what a cabaret!

After the gala dinner, in a room filled with balloons in the black, green & white of the Devon flag and the blue, black & white of the Exeter Chiefs, we were treated to a cabaret by young performers from WOW Youth Musical Theatre in Weymouth. We enjoyed numbers from *Newsies* and *Hamilton*, a timeless favourite from *42nd Street*, and the electrifying *Supercalifragelisticexpialidocious*. The spectacular performance ended with an emotional piece from *Rent* especially for the new President, Nick. Congratulations to the young performers and to Martine Burt who devised the presentation, and thanks to Alan McKeachan Chairman of WOW for making all the arrangements. ★

Dancing the night away

Devon-based jazz and swing band All Jazzed Up quickly tempted us onto the dance floor, and many of us were still high-kicking at midnight, led by an enthusiastic group of Summer School students! ★

Curtain Call

The weekend's festivities were made possible by sound and lighting provided by TOTAL Ltd (Theatre Events Productions) and we thank them for donating their equipment and staff. ★



President Nick Lawrence with Michael & Marilyn Simpson.

regionalroundup

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New Councillor Installed

After five years as the Region's Councillor, following a year as its Secretary, David Streeter decided not to seek re-election, a decision not taken lightly and one which his colleagues on the North East Committee were saddened to hear. At a meeting in September David was presented with a token of appreciation by Julie Webb, Representative for District 14. David will be missed not only for his expert organisational skills but also for his leadership over the last five years.

At the same meeting David presented Les Smith with a collaret as he took over the mantle as NODA North East Regional Councillor. Les has served as Representative for District 5 for the past six years and, in his words, has "loved every minute of the time". Les has been involved with NODA societies in South and West Yorkshire for almost 50 years and has also understudied for one North Yorkshire society. ★



2017 Summer School Memories

Catherine Enos from Dinnington Operatic Society shares her memories.

December 2016

I'd spent nearly two hours on a busy NODA website and succeeded in getting a place on the Musical Theatre in Performance - Wicked course. Yippee!

February 2017

I had an audition and was lucky enough to be awarded a bursary to help towards course costs.

29th July 2017

I hadn't even got out of the car when I saw someone from my course last year which immediately gave me a feeling of belonging!

After the welcome meeting it was off to meet our group and tutors and what a great mixed bunch they were!

30th July 2017

Our course was held in the sports hall so there was loads of space with the only downside being you couldn't hear the tutors when it rained and it was bloomin' freezing!

I loved every aspect of the course from ensemble singing with harmonies to solo lines (a personal fear I overcame!) to the boot camp and choreography. I really pushed myself physically and did I know about it on Monday!

31st July 2017

So, with an aching body, Monday was



tough going but still brilliant as getting to know the people on my course and the different way we all learn, move and sing was amazing. I did the Shakespeare course in the evening with Michael Corbidge who is infectious with his way of deciphering text without getting too caught up in the meaning initially. When the class was over the bar was calling and getting to know people not on my course in the bar was great too!

1st August

I hate the sound of my voice and really struggle singing straight songs in front of people. I forced myself to do it over and over and with the help of friends and a few minutes with Sarah de Tute (our Tutor) it gave me a little more courage to at least try.

In the evening Matthew Kelly was our guest speaker, a lovely man with great stories!

2nd and 3rd August

Course work continued to be hard work

but fun and it didn't stop in the evenings as on Wednesday I took part in the stage combat "Bar Room Brawl" and on Thursday evening I did the Aerial Walk.

4th August

A sad but joyous Friday came all too soon and we started the presentations at 3pm in the space we had been using all week. We soon had a packed house and worked well together as an ensemble, delivering our funny, energetic, moving piece ending in a nod to our departing Summer School Director with not a dry eye to be seen!

I felt an enormous sense of accomplishment for singing in front of all those people and I'm not sure I could have done it without the support and safety of my group.

To me NODA Summer School is:

- ★ A shared love of learning, theatre, life, talking, singing, dancing and crying happy tears that will create a bond with these amazing, wonderful funny people for ever.
- ★ A truly magical place that allows us to explore, experiment and play.
- ★ A place to find out about new ways of working and techniques and take those for future use in our societies and our lives.
- ★ A place to learn who we are and accept that it is ok.
- ★ A chance to challenge yourself, push through fears and self-doubt.
- ★ A place to sit at daft o'clock in the morning with new friends putting the world to rights.
- ★ A place I will always be sad to leave but will always look forward to next year. ★

Finding amateur theatre in a new city... thanks to NODA

When I moved to Leeds after graduating I was a little lost and, apart from my day job, had very little to fill my spare time with. That is until I went on to the NODA website and looked for amateur groups in my area. I sent various emails to different groups and the first to respond was Leeds Children's Theatre.

The group was established in 1935 and for over 80 years has been producing plays aimed at a young audience and running workshops to train their junior members in theatre craft and performance techniques. They pride themselves on the fact that their membership ranges from 7 to 70+ meaning that they can cast age appropriate parts in their shows as well as giving the younger members the chance of working alongside more experienced adult members, and vice versa.

In mid-October 2014 I went along to

meet the Director and Stage Manager of their current production, as well as their Chairperson. From the off I knew that I would get on really well with them and had potentially found a new group to rekindle my involvement in amateur theatre.

My first production with the group was *The Railway Children*. Thrown in at the deep end I was running sound for the show! My specialism was in Lighting and Set Design so this was way out of my comfort zone but I embraced the challenge and it was a very successful show.

From then on I built my role within the society moving on to stage manage their next three shows, joining the Committee, becoming the Stage Equipment Officer and, most recently, the Vice Chairperson of the society. The committee side of amateur theatre isn't for everyone but without this vital ingredient societies would

not be able to run and I love being a part of the decision process for such a well-established group. My role backstage is taking a hiatus in March as I will be directing the society's production of *The Demon Headmaster*. Another new title for the society and one that I hope will be enjoyable for all involved.

I am grateful to Leeds Children's Theatre for the opportunities that they have given me and I look forward to continuing to work with them in the future. Amateur theatre is a really important part of the arts culture in this country, providing families and people that cannot afford to see mainstream shows at the big theatres the opportunity to see a piece of theatre, and it is something that I hope will continue for many years to come. ★

Dan Dainter
 Leeds Children's Theatre

regionalroundup North West

Councillor's Chat



Christine Hunter-Hughes
Councillor

Hi everyone, just a brief chat for this issue because, as you can see, we have loads of interesting articles and pictures from around the region.

Sharon Drummond and I represented the North West at the AGM and Presidential Weekend, when our new President, Nick Lawrence was elected. I do hope that you will join me in congratulating Nick on his elevation and very much look forward to welcoming Nick to our Regional AGM and Awards Weekend on 5th – 7th May at a venue to be announced.

Has your society done anything of interest recently or something which you feel would be interesting or helpful to other societies? Do please write and tell us about it – send your article to Anna our regional editor and she will do her best to include it in the next issue. ★

From Seven Brides to One

Amateur dramatics enthusiasts often call their stage company their alternative family, and for Centenary Theatre Company's Matt Orillard – he couldn't think of a better place to propose to his girlfriend than after the group's latest production.

Matt, 25, from Birchwood, had played Harry in Centenary's production of *The Ladykillers*, when he dropped down on one knee after the show to propose to Danielle Segar, 26, in front of the cast and crew at The Brindley Theatre, Runcorn.

Appropriately the couple first met when appearing in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* four years ago.



Matt said: "To be surrounded by our Centenary family was a really nice moment. We met in the Centenary's autumn play four years ago at the very first rehearsal – I'd been performing here for about three years and she was re-joining after university."

Danielle added: "It was a complete surprise to me, although I did have a bit of a suspicion that something was going on a few days beforehand when he was very insistent that I had to go and watch the show on that particular night."

Matt and Danielle are now planning on getting married six years on from the day they first got together in summer 2019. ★



ACTRESS MAKES BCMCS' DREAM COME TRUE

A dream came true for the cast of BCMCS's production of *The Dream*.

The show, a 'musical fantasy' version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, was staged in October by the Bolton-based group at Walmsley Parish Hall.

In preparation for the production director and professional actor Liz Hume-Dawson called on her long-term friend, former *Coronation Street* actress Shobna Gulati to put the cast through their Bollywood-style dance paces.

The workshop helped put some finishing cultural touches to their pop ensemble work for the show, which was specially adapted by Liz.

Liz and Shobna met when working on Victoria Wood's sitcom *Dinnerladies*.

A spokesman for BCMCS said: "Doing this show is all the more relevant this academic year with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* being a set text for English literature GCSE students, and should provide an entertaining twist to traditional interpretations." ★



ADDING SPICE TO THE STAGE

A new theatre company has burst on to the North West district 8 scene, in a blaze of PVC, big hair and ripped T-shirts.

District 8 representative Louise Colohan said: "Having staged their first production *Rock Of Ages*, they have certainly cemented their position within the district. This production saw talent come from all corners of the district and beyond. Almost every aspect of the show was contributed to by the society, with people giving their time and ability to help stage this show.

"A very sad personal life event led the founder to place her focus on something that could help others in a similar position. What better way to bring about a positive from such a negative time. The strength and consistent dedication to the cause was well measured in the slick production produced. We welcome Salt N Pepper to NODA and wish them well in their next production." ★



Orrell Musicals Enter a Golden Age

From six friends having the idea of setting up an operatic society to celebrating 50 years on stage, Orrell Musical and Dramatic Society have gone full circle.

The company had its first get together in January 1968, at Trinity Methodist Church in Pemberton, setting sail to stage Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*, with around 15 members forming the then Orrell and District Gilbert and Sullivan Society.

With a successful debut and increased membership, the society moved to Winstanley College for its next production with rehearsals at Salem United Reform Church Hall in Orrell, where the group has been based ever since.



Musical and Dramatic Society and relaunched with *Hello Dolly*. In addition to concerts and shows, the company goes out carol singing for the festive season and will be part of Pemberton Christmas Market this year.

A spokesman said: "Lots of fun has been had over the last five decades and, although we no longer have any of our founder members with us, we do still have members who have been part of the society for around 40 years.

"As we move into our 50th year, we are having to leave Salem United Reform Church Hall since the church is to close and, ironically, we are moving back to Trinity Methodist Church in Pemberton for our rehearsals."

In the 50th anniversary year 2018, OMDS will stage a concert in January, a musical in July and a musical extravaganza in November, looking back at the 50 golden years. ★

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regionalroundup Scotland

NODA Scotland Conference

The NODA Scotland Conference 2018 will be held from Friday 26 to Sunday 28 October at Peebles Hydro, Innerleithen Road, Peebles EH45 8LX. Full details will be posted in due course.

Stuart McCue-Dick, NODA Scotland Councillor – A Welcome

For over thirty years I have been involved with amateur theatre on stage as a performer and off stage as stage crew and committee member, having served as Treasurer, Secretary and President of a number of societies.

For the past five years I have served on the NODA Scotland committee as website and Facebook editor and for the past four years I have also served as Treasurer for both NODA Scotland Region and our own NODA Scotland charity. This gives me a clear insight into the workings of the Regional Committee and in particular the annual conference where for the past three years I worked closely with past Councillor Gordon Blackburn to help implement changes and improvements to ensure the continued success of this popular event.

Currently amateur theatre faces a number of challenges including financial sustainability, ageing audiences and attracting new younger members. Having been elected Councillor I would like to continue the work started by

Gordon Blackburn by developing further the Business of Amateur Theatre Workshops to ensure a secure future for amateur theatre. I would also like to expand the work of the Youth Adviser to help attract and retain new and younger members of societies. I will also work closely with the NODA Scotland Committee to continue to develop our conference at Peebles Hydro to ensure it remains not only popular but also relevant to both society and individual members.

Over the coming months I look forward to meeting as many members of NODA clubs as possible as I set out the NODA Scotland Committee's plans to help grow and develop amateur theatre over the coming years. If I can provide societies with any help or advice, please do not hesitate to get in touch. ★

Stuart McCue-Dick

Kirkcaldy Youth Music Theatre

In 1958 three people with a great interest in the local amateur theatre world of music and drama decided to launch a musical group aimed at the young people of Kirkcaldy and the surrounding community. Thus was born Kirkcaldy Teenage Opera Group, based in the YWCA in Kirkcaldy. The guiding principles of the group were (and still are): To offer an opportunity for any young person of secondary school age to participate in a musical production.

The name of the group subsequently changed to YWCA Light Opera Group and finally to Kirkcaldy Youth Music Theatre. The first production in 1959 was *The Rajah of Rajapore* (also known as *The Magic Ruby*) – an Edwardian Musical with music by C K Proctor. Over 58 years productions have included *South Pacific*, *Hans Andersen*, *Half A Sixpence* and *Barnum*. Currently the group stages its production in the Adam Smith Theatre. Recently the young people have had the chance to perform in *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon* and *Legally Blonde* as well as fun shows such as *Eurobeat*.

Kirkcaldy Youth Music Theatre was the recipient of the NODA Scotland Youth Award in 2014. ★

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50 Years of Pantomime!



There have been so many highlights over the years, including participation at the Glasgow Garden Festival 1988, an appearance on *Cilla Black's Surprise, Surprise*, and last year the broadcast of our panto on Scottish Television.

Glasgow Airport was opened in 1966 and the following year a group of employees got together with the idea of putting on an entertainment for local charities. Eric Gould in the Finance Department came up with a script for an airport pantomime called *Ali Babbotsinch*. (Glasgow Airport was originally called *Abbotsinch*). The show went on in the West School, Paisley, on 15 and 16 December 1967 – and Glasgow Airport Drama Club was born!

The Club built up a repertoire of seven main pantomimes (with book, music and lyrics by Eric Gould) which, with a bit of updating, we still rotate annually. With the pantomime at one time running for two weeks at a time, and in recent years cramming 9 full-length shows into one week, it is estimated that something in the region of 125,000 audience members have attended an Eric Gould panto.

After 40 years we changed our name in 2007 to Runway Theatre Company which widened our appeal, while still preserving our links with the Airport, and enhancing the good reputation for traditional family pantomimes of which we are justly proud.

In 2010 the company diversified and now produces a spring musical each year with a policy of producing new or rarely performed works. Our first musical was *Camelot*, and other productions have included the Scottish Premieres of *The Drowsy Chaperone* and *Lend Me A Tenor - The Musical*; the Scottish Amateur Premiere of *Whistle Down the Wind*, as well as our recent acclaimed productions of *Evita* and *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. ★

Edinburgh's musical performers know they've got the chops to bring home the Bacon

This coming March the Edinburgh based Bohemians Lyric Opera Company (BLOC) will be bringing *Footloose – The Musical* to the King's Theatre stage. Following their recent successes at bringing film-turned-musicals to the Scottish capital – past shows include *Legally Blonde*, *Sister Act*, and *9 to 5* – the company are ready to kick off their Sunday shoes and rebel. And they've got permission from the original renegade himself.

During his visit to the Edinburgh International Film Festival in June original *Footloose* heart-throb Kevin Bacon greeted eager fans, including dedicated BLOC alumnus Padraic Hamrouge. The pair chatted about some of Bacon's classic films and of course the upcoming musical production of what is critically considered to be his breakthrough movie, *Footloose*.

"He was super nice; he was very quiet, but had time for questions and autographs. I told him about the "Bohs" production of *Footloose* and his grin at



hearing the news is in the selfie just after I told him, hence the big smile!" said Padraic.

Rehearsals are already underway for the 60+ cast as they get ready to cut loose next spring. As part of their fundraising efforts, the "Bohs" will be raffling off a signed *Footloose* poster, so keep an eye out on their Facebook page (@bohemiansedinburgh) for more details on how to enter! And if you're lucky enough to find yourself in Edinburgh next March, don't miss your chance to lose your blues with the Bohemians. ★

Jo Heinemeier, Press Assistant, Bohemians Lyric Opera Company

T Davies Brock, Regional Representative (District 4), Retires



Davies's interest in the amateur stage began at Ayr Academy where he participated in several Gilbert & Sullivan operettas and designed and made the scenery for the Academy's production of *Iolanthe*. After

qualifying as a lawyer in 1959, he joined Ayrshire Philharmonic Opera Society and played several principal parts, also participating in the chorus. He was the Society's Hon Secretary for a number of years and became President in the Society's Golden Jubilee in 1984. He currently holds the position of the Society's Honorary President.

In 1973 the Gaiety Theatre, Ayr, in which the Philharmonic staged its shows, was threatened with closure and redevelopment and to prevent that happening Davies applied successfully in his own right to have the Theatre listed in the Register of Buildings of Historic and Architectural interest. As a result the Gaiety still stands today.

In 1982 Davies became Regional Representative for Ayrshire, Renfrewshire and Bute, a position he has held since then. He has been privileged to attend many productions of District 4 societies over the years and has made many friends during that period. He thought it was time to retire from the role at the Scottish Region's Conference at Peebles in October. Following upon the untimely death in January 2017 of Scottish Regional Councillor, Gordon Blackburn, Davies filled in as Acting Councillor for the Scottish Region, a position he vacated in September upon the election of the new Councillor. Davies has also acted as Hon Legal Adviser to the Scotland Region on matters involving Scots Law. Davies is also an Honorary Member of NODA, a distinction conferred on him at the National AGM at Buxton a few years ago.

Davies met his wife Joan at the NODA Summer School held at Ripon in 1969 and they married the following year. They have two sons, Graeme and Kevin, and three grandchildren. ★

regionalroundup South East

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Councillor's Comments

Exciting times ahead. New awards, new date, new venue, new programme...

The 2018 South East Celebration.
New Date: Sunday 18th March
Change of Venue: Playhouse Theatre Whitstable, the home of The Lindley Players
Wanted: Societies and individuals to showcase the talent in the South East.

I am pleased to announce that Dee Sharpe has taken over the role of Regional Rep for District 1 I know she will actively support the societies in her district. She has a hard act to follow for Lance Milton has given dedicated

service in so many ways not only to NODA but to all societies. I take this opportunity to thank Lance for all his support and encouragement. Fortunately he will remain as one of the new assistant reps available to deputise when necessary. We have four other assistant reps Mary Coyte, Meg Bray, Janice Redway and Harry Cumming. They will be working with their mentors over the next year to learn the ropes so if they visit your show please give them a warm welcome.

I look forward to meeting many more of you in the coming year. ★

Kay Rowan

Gordon Harris – 50th anniversary congratulations

Gordon Harris, our much loved president, this year reaches 50 years with the Kentish Players, having joined in 1967 for our production of *The King & I*.



During those 50 years Gordon has appeared on stage many times in both the chorus and as a principal character. If you have been a supporter of the Kentish Players at any time during the last 50 years you will no doubt have seen Gordon on stage and, on at least one occasion, more of him than you ever anticipated; Gordon once played the Emperor in *Hans Anderson*...need we say more?! Joking aside, his willingness to do whatever a director asks of him and to work tirelessly on all aspects of his character has meant that Gordon has created some wonderful memories for those of us lucky enough to have stood on stage beside him, or to have had the good fortune to watch him in action. And for those of you who were wondering, Gordon's own fondest memories come from *Anne of Green Gables* in which he

played Matthew Cuthbert. Gordon's obsession with shoes when performing is in part due to his own view that the little details make the character right, but also his in depth knowledge of costumes. This knowledge has led to him co-ordinating the costumes for the Kentish Players productions on many occasions. He became our President in 2009 and continues to offer his insight and advice based on those 50 years of experience. He also attends and hosts most committee meetings.

We are very grateful that Gordon is a member of the Kentish Players. He has given the KPs 50 years of great service, sound advice, good humour, memorable performances and above all his friendship, and we look forward to many more years of the same.

Happy 50th Gordon from all of us at the Kentish Players. ★



Read about another brand new play, *Spirits of the Rock*, in the West Midlands roundup on pages 34-35

Benches, a new play by Margaret Graham

In May 2017 Ifield Barn Theatre Society brought to their stage another original script by member Margaret Graham. As with her previous NODA South East award-winning plays - *Miniskirts & Revelations* and *Flowery Shirts & Strange Relations* - *Benches* provoked a lot of curiosity. It was performed to five packed houses and provoked many thoughtful responses. *Benches* - *A Ghost Story* was inspired by Hove seafront which is where the play is set.

The previous year, walking the esplanade, Margaret had wondered about the memorial benches. What if such a diverse range of mortals were seated on 'their' benches, observing the comings and goings of oblivious passers-by? What would these 'Bencher's' say to each other? What would they have in common? Suppose they included some 1920s end-of-the-pier showgirls; a newly-deceased young biker; a 1950s Nan with a sensitive secret; a despised conscientious objector who met his fate in the Second World War?

Richard Townley, the conscientious objector, became the focal point of the play and is based on a semi-biographical script written by Margaret's father - Harold Goodwin - in 1941. It includes a tribunal scene which (as with his daughter's writing) is both comedic and poignant.

Richard's story, his conscientious objector philosophy and tribunal scene, could have been a contentious issue even though the intention was not conversion to his point of view. However, feedback showed positive reactions - it gave some younger people an insight into past generations' experiences, older people related to some of the characters and stories, and others said they found it 'thought provoking', especially in regard to current world happenings.

As NODA South East representative Lance Milton wrote in his report: 'The concept is wonderful, the whole company should be proud of a very engaging and entertaining production which I think Harold would have enjoyed watching as much as we, the audience did.' ★

Read about another very special anniversary in the East roundup pages 8-9

A Phoenix in the Surrey Hills – Polesden Lacey Shakespeare

In 1951 the villagers of Bookham carved an open air theatre "for the people" out of the chalk hillside at the National Trust property, Polesden Lacey. Since then, there has been at least one performance of Shakespeare at the theatre every year.



Sixty years later, in 2009, the flame nearly died, when the National Trust decided to stop underwriting the performances. This was too much for a small group of local enthusiasts who banded together to create Polesden Lacey Shakespeare Ltd, which rose, phoenix-like, from the ashes, albeit with substantial practical support from the National Trust.

Evening performances and expensive sets were abandoned, allowing ticket prices to be kept to a minimum with no charge for children under sixteen. Interestingly audience levels were maintained since parents, who might have otherwise stayed away, attended with their children.

The company now funds a group of professional actors who perform scenes from Shakespeare and abbreviated versions of Shakespeare's plays for children in local schools and around the grounds of Polesden Lacey.

The new phoenix is being kept alive by local people who have a passion for Shakespeare and want to keep the theatre, built by the people, for the people, alive and kicking. ★

Sadie Williams: Tunbridge Wells Operatic & Dramatic Society

Sadie joined Tunbridge Wells Operatic (TWODS) in 1947 performing in *Katinka*. She met her future husband Rex the following year in *Tom Jones* and they married in 1950. During the next 50 years, Rex and Sadie between them did virtually every job needed to promote the success and efficient running of the Society and were made Life Members of TWODS in 1996.

Sadie initially performed as chorus member and dancer, then taking principal roles such as Azuri in *The Desert Song* and Meg in *Brigadoon*. In 1976, she moved on to production, directing *The Mikado* and several other operettas from the G&S repertoire during the next five years.



Sadie first served on the committee in 1954-57 and was elected for many subsequent terms; she occupied both Vice Chairman and Chairman roles for TWODS and LAMPS. In addition, she was Lighting Assistant and acted as DSM for more than 50 shows, undertaking these important tasks with great efficiency and dedication. Sadie became Company Manager in 1998 and is still the 'public face' of TWODS, greeting audiences as a key part of the Front of House team. She is also President of LAMPS.

Earlier this year Sadie was presented with her 70 year award by the Chairman of TWODS, Kevin Denson and the two are pictured.

John Barnes, Chairman of NODA, has commented that Sadie never fails to invite him to TWODS productions and, in the interval to "Sadie's Corner" in the bar where she dispenses hospitality to VIPS attending. Sadie has an encyclopaedic knowledge of amateur theatre and always willing to share with all. ★

Curtain up on NODA's new website

Months in the making, with hours of work behind the scenes, NODA's brand new website launched at the end of September during the national AGM.

Here's a quick Q&A about some of the changes we've made.

Why did NODA need a new website?
An excellent question. The old site had been serving us for close to five years, it was getting very large and wasn't always very easy to use. Building a new site has given us the chance to review and improve the way things work. The new website uses the same address as the old one, so anyone can find us at noda.org.uk

So, what's changed?
The way our systems talk to each other. The new website integrates with our national database. This means that you can be in control of all your data, and can update your personal or society details at any time simply by logging into the website. In turn, this means our records will be more up to date and accurate, making it easier for us to talk to you. We've also been able to improve the experience of using the website – it's now much simpler to navigate and search to find the things you need.

Where is the members' area?
This is one of the biggest changes we've made. There is no longer one specific area that only members can access. Instead, all the pages that were previously tucked away in the members' area can be seen in the main menu, underneath 'Our Services'. If you hold the membership details for your society or you're an individual member and you are logged into the site you will be able to click on the pages and view the

content. If you are not a member, or you are not logged in, when you click on the page you'll see a message explaining that this content is for members only.

But why?
The great thing about doing it this way is that everyone can see the kinds of services we offer in the main menu. It will help us to let people know who we are and what we do. And it makes everything easy to locate!

I still can't find what I'm looking for!
Don't worry! Just use the search box at the top of the menu. Simply type in a couple of keywords about the thing you're looking for and choose your page from the list of results.

Why does it look different on my mobile?
The new website is built to be responsive. This means that if you visit the site on a mobile phone or a tablet the site recognises this and changes the way it looks to make your experience better. The mobile view forces the page to fit your phone or tablet screen so you don't need to keep scrolling across

to view the whole thing. It also makes the menus easier to select on a touchscreen.

What about Summer School?
Summer School has its very own area on the new website. Simply click on the Summer School homepage in the menu and explore the tabs across the top of the page. You'll need to be signed into the website to book onto a course.

What else is new?
You can now easily share pages from the site, including show reports and news to your social media accounts. When you're using the website on a computer just click on the icon at the right hand edge of the page to quickly share to Facebook, Twitter or other sharing platforms.



How you can help us

The new website is looking great but you can help us make it even better! We want to make sure we've got all your details stored correctly and we also want to know when you're performing! Use our handy step by step guide to get online and keep us up to date.

STEP BY STEP GUIDE - GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE NEW WEBSITE

1. Register with the site
The first thing you need to do is register with the new site. Even if you were registered with the old site you will need to do this again because we have changed the way the site links to our database – don't worry it's quick and very easy.

One thing to note: make sure when you register you use the exact details we have on record for you. If you don't register with the email address and surname we hold on file for you, the database won't link you up and you might not have all the permissions you need to get going!

- There are two levels of registration on the site.**
- a. If you are an individual member or hold the membership details for your society, registering will allow you access to update your show listings and society or individual details.
 - b. If you are not a member, registering on the site will not give you membership to NODA but it will allow you to book onto summer school courses, shop online with us and give you easy access to apply online to become a NODA member.



2. Check and update your society details.
If you're an official in your society, when you register for the site, we'll link your account to your society's so that when you log in you'll just need to click 'My account' and then the 'My societies' tab. Click 'log in' next to your society's name and you will be automatically logged in as your society. You can update your society contact details in the 'My details' tab at the top. Remember to save all your changes. To return to using the site as yourself, rather than your society, simply click 'log out'.

3. Add a show to the What's On guide.
Let us know what you're staging next! Log in as your society (or as an individual or joint member) and click on the shows/events tab at the top of the page. Click 'Add new' and fill out the form with the details of your upcoming shows.

4. Find your show reports
Simply click on 'Regions' in the menu and select your area, then click on the 'Reports' tab at the top of the page. All reports are listed in date order. Don't forget to share your reports to social media so everyone can read your reviews!

You can also find details about your regional committee, read news from your region and browse a list of societies near you using the tabs in your regional section.

Need some help?
Don't panic. If it's all a bit much and you're not sure where to start, just get in touch!

You can email us at info@noda.org.uk or call us on **01733 374790** and we'll help you out. ★

regionalroundup South West

The South West's Nick Lawrence becomes NODA President!

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Jack Price, Axminster Drama Club

On Saturday 23rd September at NODA's AGM in the Marriot Hotel, Bristol, Nick Lawrence was made President - after many years of service to NODA and NODA South West in particular.

Nick has a year ahead of travelling the length and breadth of the country to visit all of the regions. His first visit however, was much closer to home –

Axminster Drama Club, to see their production of the musical *Spamalot*. The club were only too glad to welcome Nick – and the chain!

We'll keep abreast of Nick's travels this year and update you on the other events at the AGM in coming editions of NODA today. ★

Oddity Theatre raises funds for the Wessex Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre

At their recent run of *Avenue Q*, Warminster based Oddity Theatre raised £577.23 for the Wessex Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre. Congratulations on a fantastic effort for a very worthy cause – and a great production of the musical too! ★



Jack Price

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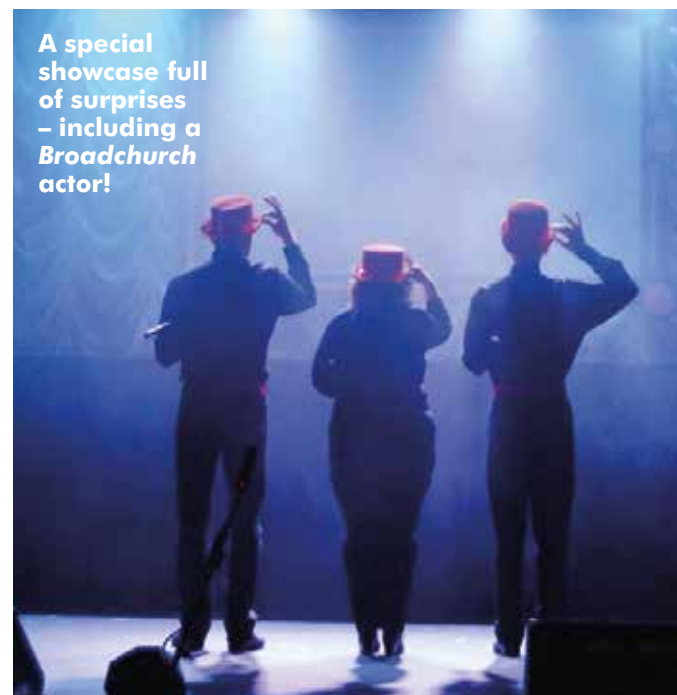
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A special showcase full of surprises – including a Broadchurch actor!



Ria Hodson-Walker

70 Years of Hanham Players

The Hanham Players, based in Hanham, Bristol have just celebrated their 70th anniversary, with a very special show. Compiled by organiser Andrew Stowe, from around 30 different shows from their back catalogue, the *70th Anniversary Showcase* did its best to demonstrate the breadth of productions the group had staged over the decades. The whole show was set around 70 years of world history, using elements of all their favourite past productions to illustrate their journey through time. Winston Churchill could be heard next to Shakespeare, Alan Ayckbourn and even Her Majesty the Queen made an appearance!

Past members were invited back to the group in a one-off event just before the show, and filmed interviews with them were used during the production. The video projections used throughout the show gave the audience a glimpse behind the curtain of the group. Their large local following contains members that have come to see their shows for 20 or 30 years, and so this was special as it was their chance to see the history of the people within the group.

Whilst mindful of making a show fit for their audience, there was also a sense that the show should be for the group - so there were a few surprises along the way. One such surprise came in the form of support from *Broadchurch* actor Joe Sims, who used to be a member of the group, appearing in their pantomime back in 1994. Joe recorded a special message for the cast of the show, which was used during the final video projection.

Combining the talents of the adult cast members, with those of the Hanham Players Youth Group, the Players ran their show for two nights in September to large audiences. Congratulations to all involved and here's to another 70 years of the group!! ★

Read about another 70th anniversary in the Wales and Ireland roundup overleaf

How to make a Cortina!

With no theatre in Crediton, (just some pretty ordinary school halls) CODS is challenged every year to stage its shows. The 'fit up' for their musicals usually takes about 10 days, though this does allow a blank canvas, based upon the vision of the director. The vision for this year's production of *Made in Dagenham* was 'in the round' and it needed a car ... a 1968 Cortina, as produced by the Dagenham Factory at the time of the strike.

This was quite challenge for the production team - these cars are collectors' items and probably start at around £3000 – quite outside the show budget! Fortunately one eagle-eyed member of the production team, traveling home from business in Cornwall, spotted a car well tucked-away almost out of sight from the road with a familiar shape. Was it a Cortina? It was, but not quite the model the Society hoped for and it was a rust bucket, with lots of parts missing. With some persuasion it was just about affordable though and was acquired.



Imaginative minds got to work. A real car was needed in the show for the song *Cortina!* covering the grand launch of the new Cortina, it also faced the scrutiny of an audience in the round who would be pretty close to the action. With so much of the car too far gone, the best thing to do was to cut it in half ...length-ways! And after a considerable number of hours, skill, hard graft, oxy-acetylene, welding gear, filler, spray guns, primer, car paint, and go faster stripes, the group had their Cortina. It wasn't an MK2, but the dancing girls, clad in shiny gold dresses, were good enough to provide a distraction, as did the 12ft by 10ft video movie of really classy Lotus 1968 MK2, actually made in the Dagenham factory, that was filmed earlier.

So the illusion was complete, pulled together by a great deal of imagination, an eagle-eyed fixer, hours of skilled hard work, a bit of filming, and the magic of lights, costume and one great song and dance routine. All 4 minutes 41 seconds of it looked great, and my goodness it was worth it! Find out more at www.codsonline.com! ★

New South West District Representatives

District 3 – Plymouth and West Devon: Gareth Davies (replacing Michael Simpson)

District 5 – Mid and East Devon: Joyce Pomeroy (replacing Graham Liverton, whom has become South West Region Councillor)

District 10 – East Somerset and South Wiltshire: Delia Lee (replacing Petra Schofield)



Michael Simpson has stepped down as a District Representative after an incredible 35 years in the role, for both the North and the South West. Michael, and his wife Marilyn received their 55 year service awards at the NODA AGM in September.



regionalroundup Wales & Ireland

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COUNCILLOR'S CHAT



Having recently returned from the National AGM and Gala weekend in Bristol, I had the honour of officially being made your Councillor. We had a successful

weekend with seven of your Regional Committee in attendance supporting our new President, Nick Lawrence. We also witnessed Mrs Jackie Steadman (London Councillor) being appointed as Vice President. Congratulations to both and we wish them every success in their new ambassadorial roles.

In August 2016 I was appointed to NODA as Councillor with Responsibility to Youth. I will continue as your Regional Councillor with the added responsibility of overseeing NODA's Youth Advisers and our young people. I am excited to take on this challenge and I am looking forward to working with our Youth Advisers and supporting them within the organisation.

Your regional committee are busy organising your Regional Gala and AGM which will take place in May 2018. We have lots of exciting plans to enhance this year's Gala and Masterclasses. I hope that you will be able to attend to support the achievements of fellow societies and also to network with other members.

As you will see in this edition of NODA Today we have appointed Mr Allan Mears as your District 4 representative and Mr Matt Hampson as your Regional Youth Adviser. I would like to give them a very warm welcome to the regional team and look forward to working with them in order to enhance our Youth section and District 4.

Please remember in order for your society to be nominated for a Regional Award the Regional Councillor must be invited to your production. I continue to ask for at least eight weeks notice due to the area which I cover. I welcome invitations to be sent to jordan.hill@noda.org.uk.

I hope you enjoy this edition of NODA Today and do not forget to pop along to our NODA Youth page to catch up with what our younger members have been achieving in the last couple of months. ★

Your friend,

Jordan Hill FRSA
Councillor

We have received the very sad news of the peaceful passing of Mr John Davies husband of Mrs Sharon Davies District 7 Representative. Sharon and her family are very much in our thoughts and prayers at this sad time.



Queen Honours Musical Director for her Services to Music and Amateur Theatre in Pembrokeshire

The Musical Director of Milford Haven Amateur Operatic Society was honoured in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in June, with a British Empire Medal for her Services to Music and Amateur Community Theatre in Pembrokeshire.

Marian started her love of amateur theatre at the Melyncrythan Operatic Society in 1968 as their Deputy Accompanist, and moved to Cardiff where she joined Penarth Players before moving onto Llandaff Musical Society, becoming their Accompanist.

In 1979 she moved to Milford Haven and in 1982 became their Musical Director. She is still waving her baton and would like to thank all those who have supported and encouraged her in the Societies where she has been a member. ★

Fusion Theatre does Starlight Express



Check out the NODA Youth roundup on pages 6-7 for more news from youth societies across the country!

When I was first told that Fusion Theatre's next show was *Starlight Express* my first thought was, "I hope they have good insurance!" My second thought was, "I hope my own health insurance is up to date!" We began by simply skating (or clinging to the side) around a rink for an hour and a half on a few Wednesday nights. By the 4th or 5th evening I decided to attempt some "dancing". There were lots of sore bums that night, including my own! The biggest challenge for me was negotiating the sheer size of the cast (52 young people between ages 11 and 21 in total on skates) and also thinking outside the box in terms of choreography and movement. Basic go to steps like a step ball change or a grapevine were out of the question as they didn't work on skates, and we had three ramps to

deal with. In the end what we put on the stage was something way beyond my initial expectations. A few of them even performed split leaps, backwards rolls and cartwheels. Most importantly we got through the whole process with no injuries and the insurance safely intact! ★

Jillian Liggett
Fusion Theatre Choreographer



70 Years of Colwyn Abbey Players

2017 has been a cause for celebration for the Colwyn Abbey Players. The Christmas production, *Ebenezer Scrooge* – written by Abbey members Colin Holmes and Peter Williams – won a NODA award for Best Production. At the same ceremony, David Huxley received the award for best performance for the role of Scrooge. Later in the year, the Abbey Players' production of *The Bald Prima-Donna* won the Conwy one-act drama festival, and Rob Edwards took home the Best Performance award. This took the group through to the Wales finals in Newtown, where Sharon Huxley and Naomi O'Neill received nominations for best performance – and the latter was presented with a bursary for drama tuition over the summer. *The Bald Prima-Donna* also won the prize for best production at the Leverhulme Drama Festival in Port Sunlight, where another Abbey

production – *Blink and You'll Miss Me* – won the award for best set presentation.

But the biggest cause for celebration comes in July, when the Abbey celebrates 70 years since its first production – which was *Vindication* by Leonard J. Hines. The company has only grown bigger and stronger since setting out with this one-act in 1947. Over the years they have produced numerous productions of an eclectic range, such as *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *The Killing of Sister George*, *Alfie*, *Stepping Out*, *Calendar Girls*, and *Acorn Antiques: The Musical* – which also won two NODA Awards. To celebrate, they'll be

having a celebration evening at Old Colwyn's Interchange – which will feature excerpts, performed live, from their 70 years of productions. ★

Read about another 70th anniversary in the South West roundup on the previous page



New Youth Adviser to Wales and Ireland

Matt is an Arranger, Orchestrator, Conductor and Musical Director from Cardiff. He trained

at The Royal Military School of Music and The Royal Academy of Music with Professor Veronica Clayton. He also works as conductor and orchestrator and this has taken him across the UK and Ireland working with some of the world's leading artists including Lorna Luft, Kerry Ellis, Jai McDowall, Joe McElderry, Adam Garcia & Christina Bianco.

As a conductor Matt has led some of the UK and Ireland's leading orchestras including The Irish Philharmonic Orchestra, The British Sinfonietta and The Welsh Session Orchestra.

Matt is looking forward to working with and supporting youth societies in Wales and Ireland. If you would like him to attend a youth performance alongside your Regional Representative and Regional Councillor, then please invite him by sending him an email. You can also contact Matt with regard to policies and child protection training. Matt can be contacted on matt.hampson@noda.org.uk ★



New District 4 Regional Representative

Having first stepped foot on a stage back in 1981 in a production of *Finian's Rainbow* Allan

has appeared in and directed many productions throughout South Wales. His 2014 production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* won the NODA Wales & Ireland Best Production, an achievement he is very proud of.

Allan has for a number of years also been an Appraiser for the Glamorgan Drama League and is also a member of The Drama Association of Wales. Allan has also appeared in a number of productions as an extra for both BBC and S4C.

Allan is very passionate about keeping amateur theatre alive and has a passion for nurturing and developing talent, and is looking forward to making lots of new friends within District 4. If you would like him to attend your forthcoming production, then please don't hesitate to email him. Allan can be contacted on allan.mears@noda.org.uk ★

regionalroundup West Midlands

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COUNCILLOR'S COMMENTS

My grateful thanks for your support in my first year as Regional Councillor, a period that has flown by. I am sorry it has not been possible to visit you all, though I take this opportunity to express appreciation for your kind invitations, with many already in the diary, and I am looking forward to visiting more societies for the first time.



The new NODA website was successfully launched at the Presidential Gala and AGM in Bristol in September, where Nick Lawrence was inaugurated as NODA President succeeding Michael Hastilow. Michael gave his President's Award to 'Side By Side' a society he has long admired for their work and ethos.

NODA West Midlands members will be saddened to hear of the passing suddenly of Derek Wharton while on a cruise with his wife Linda. Derek enthralled attendees at a workshop he gave at our regional awards ceremony in April, our condolences go to family and many friends. ★

Ian G. Cox
Regional Councillor NODA West Midlands

I am pleased to welcome to our team Alan Bruce who succeeds Rachel Millar as Regional Representative for District 3. Alan brings his experience of performing on stage and knowledge as a local newspaper critic to the role, I am sure he will be a great asset to our team.



It's all going on in the West Midlands

District 8 held their seasonal gathering, attended by a record number of societies and individuals. Dennis Price's meetings are simple, friendly and social, where we catch up on the latest from NODA and the District, their what's on list is discussed along with news, issues and concerns all aired openly around the table. In attendance was Andy Brown from District 5 ahead of the combined meeting with Bruce Wyatt from District 10. Their first joint meeting was held at the Norbury Theatre providing an opportunity for their societies to look into ways to work together, share ideas as well as looking at how NODA could benefit these groups. ★

The Writing of *Spirits of the Rock*

We, the New Kinver Players, were very honoured when the National Trust invited us to contribute to the Centenary Celebrations of their acquisition of Kinver Edge and the Rock Houses.



Kinver Edge, a heath and woodland escarpment, is home to a set of cave houses carved straight into the local sandstone rock face and the last troglodyte dwellings occupied in England.

The first written account of inhabitants was back in 1777 and the last residents moved out in 1962. Their peak was in the early 1860s when there were 11 dwellings, housing 44 people.

There were no relevant 'ready-made' plays, so I volunteered; a daunting task as I'd never written a play before. We decided to stage it in one of the caves, which contributed greatly to its success. The atmosphere and acoustics were incredible, helping us to bring to life not only the characters, but the houses themselves. The intimate setting provided space for an audience of 50 per performance, and we were delighted to be sold-out for every one. Such was the success, we have been invited to do a repeat performance in spring 2018.

The history of the site is fascinating. I was determined to keep the play factual, and was fortunate to have access to interviews

from the early 1990s, with people who had lived in, or visited, the Rock Houses when they were children; meaning I was able to base all my characters on real people.

There were six characters, reminiscing about their experiences, who had lived there sometime between 1917, when the National Trust acquired the Rock Houses until 1962. To make it more interesting, I added another dimension and a twist!

During my research I discovered Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret visited the Rock Houses in 1949 when they were teenagers. It was an impromptu visit – they just turned up! Our Society wrote to the Queen to tell her about our play *Spirits of the Rock*, and received a lovely letter in return. We'd like to think that Her Majesty remembered her trip to the Rock Houses back in her carefree days. Did she have a wry smile on her face when reading our letter? We will never know. ★

New Kinver Players
By Chairman Martin Ward

A Marriage Made in Worcester

In a time when we are hearing of societies merging, closing or expanding their repertoire to include drama or pantomime, it is not often we hear of one changing tack and name completely to take on Grand Opera. But Opera Worcester, formerly Great Witley Operatic Society have done just that.



company staged a highly successful production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and next year Opera Worcester will be delivering another Mozart favourite to their audience.

Chairman, Caroline Causier commented: "Nobody else is producing opera locally, there was an opportunity not only to attract a whole new audience but to introduce opera to people who hadn't experienced it before. These days, many more people can access opera at the cinema or on television but nothing can really replace hearing it live in the theatre."

In 2016 Opera Worcester took on *Carmen*, their first production which attracted new singers and excellent reviews. A year later the

Caroline concluded: "This does not mean that we will not be offering musical theatre and G&S productions in the future but Grand Opera will now feature much more strongly and regularly in our repertoire."

With talented support and guidance from MD Sue Black, a well-known and respected professional soprano, and Director Andrew Rawle introducing a distinctive style, Opera Worcester's productions are sure to be a success! Not to mention the chorus, singers and society members all work hard to create their wonderfully successful productions. We wish them well. ★

Opera Worcester
Patricia Head, Publicity with Janine Graeme, Regional Editor.

A few words from the West Midlands team

Our District Representatives have seen many memorable performances this year from Snow Whites and Pantomime Dames to Elizas from *My Fair Lady*, Dancers from *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* and Celebrations of longevity. The list goes on and includes a number of youth productions, solos and ensemble pieces that sent tingles down their spines, and the year is still not over! There are many more productions to come before the teams focus on the nominees for our awards categories.

On behalf of the West Midlands Committee Members we'd like to extend a warm welcome to NODA for our new societies and individual members. A huge thank you goes to all our NODA WM members, you've brought smiles and laughter to our representatives and have been understanding when illness made it difficult to get to see you. Our team would like to say a massive well done to all societies for your hard work, we are bowled over with the number of Youth Productions that came up in discussion, your efforts are testament to the enthusiasm we have for amateur theatre and wish you all the best for the rest of the year.

We look forward to seeing you in 2018, if not before. ★

SAVE THE DATE

NODA West Midlands AGM and Awards day is set for Sunday 15th April at Stourbridge Town Hall, NEW Regional awards for Pantomimes, Youth and Representatives Awards will be presented. Don't forget to book your place before the date on the form so you don't miss out on tickets. ★

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