

*National Operatic & Dramatic
Association
South West Amateur Theatre
Magazine*

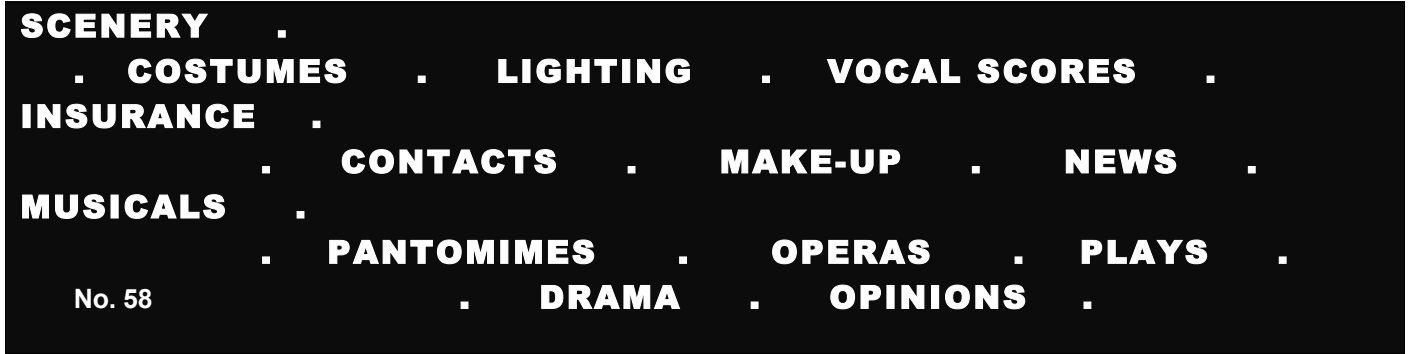
“Lost in the Wilderness”

**district 10
AUTUMN 2008**

REVIEWS

STAGE MUSICALS

OPERETTAS



ALEC RUDDICK reports on District 10

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South Pacific	Aldbourne Light Entertainment Club	Nunsense	Wootton Bassett Light Opera Society
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THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE Bath Operatic & Dramatic Society Theatre Royal

Director/Choreographer: Alan Spencer Musical Director: Peter Blackwood April 2008

What a fabulous production. The orchestra was tuneful, well balanced and never overpowered the singing. Costumes supplied by *Costume Workshop, Isle of Wight* were beautiful and the scenery by *Paul Lazell* was very good. The chorus singing and acting was particularly good, and there was an enthusiasm running throughout that was infectious. The lighting and sound were well controlled and make-up was very professional. All the cast gave tremendous performances, including some of those making their debut with BODS. Geoff White as the Pirate King was swashbuckling and energetic with fabulous facial expressions and a good clear strong voice. Jeffrey Palmer as Frederic gave a good all round performance. His diction was very good and he had a good singing voice. Twenty year old Charlotte Harrill has a beautiful singing voice and also proved to be a fine actress. She was coquettish without making the part silly and her duet with Frederic “Stay, Frederic, stay” was impressively moving. Alan Spencer had once again given us a superb production deserving the highest praise.

CALAMITY JANE Devizes Light Operatic Society Dauntsey School

Director/Choreographer: Kim Pearce Musical Director: Victoria Winchcombe April 2008

With music by Sammy Fain and lyrics by Paul Francis Webster this production was somewhat unbalanced. As in parts it was very good, but some were not quite up to the mark. The orchestra was tuneful and well balanced. Julie Maidment in the role of Calamity Jane, gave an impressive performance. Paul Morgan was well cast as Wild Bill Hickock and sang extremely well. Sam Stevens as Danny Gilmartin had a good military bearing and a good singing voice. His duet with Katie “Love You Dearly” was most impressive. Cassandra Smith as Katie Brown gave a faultless performance. Her singing and acting were impeccable. John Craig played the flapping proprietor of the Golden Garter very well and Bethany Bowerbank was delightful as Susan. Jim Marshall did well as Francis Fryer and Tor Burt looked fabulous as Adelaide Adams. Trevor Hill made the most of Rattlesnake despite having to wear an atrocious beard. In Act 2 it was a pity that “a trail through a pass in the Black Hills” was not staged in front of tabs. It was most distracting to have this played within the Golden Garter. Also if the chorus had been in front of tabs the singing would have been more thrilling and louder. This also applied to the similar scene for “Secret Love”. The movements of the stagehands in the background were a great mistake. Overall this was a good production spoilt by some technical errors.

SOUTH PACIFIC	Aldbourne Light Entertainment Club	Memorial Hall
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<i>Director: Debbie Page</i>	<i>Musical Director: Vanessa Butler</i>	<i>April 2008</i>
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For anyone to tackle Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical on such a small stage is very ambitious. ALEC proved it could be done and very successfully too. Sarah Crookall (Ngana) & Henry Leigh (Jerome) were delightful in "La Vie est Belle" which got the production off well. Angela Lawley proved to be well cast as Nellie Forbush and sang her way into the audience's heart, as did Jonathan Hill as Emile de Becque. Heather Athawes was in her element as Bloody Mary and Robyn Hale was charming as Liat. Mark Davies (Lt. Cable) gave his usual professional performance and sang well. Richard Osborne and Nick Leigh were impressive as Captain Bracket and Commander Harbison and Peter Lawler got the most out of the role of Luther Billis. All the other characters were well portrayed and the singing was of a very high standard. The music played by Russel Barnes on keyboard was most professional and well controlled. Everyone did a great job in presenting a first-class and most enjoyable show.

NUNSENSE	Wootton Bassett Light Opera Society	Memorial Hall
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<i>Director: Marion Aspell</i>	<i>Musical Director: Brother Phillip</i>	<i>April 2008</i>
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This musical comedy by Dan Goggin was very well received by the large audience on Thursday evening. It was full of fun and energy, and proved to be a real team effort with all the Nuns performing well and showing various talents; singing, dancing and lots of humour. It was a nice touch having Father Terry and the Nuns welcoming the audience to their seats and good use was made of the hall throughout the production. The singing was very good and the action full of breathtaking energy. It was almost a laugh from beginning to end. The musicians, bass, drums and keyboards were more than adequate for this venue and played well. The Director, who also played Sister Mary Hubert, assisted by Stuart Dark should be well pleased with the success of this comedy. Everyone concerned should be congratulated on a good evening's entertainment.

THE GONDOLIERS	Bath Gilbert & Sullivan Society	Wroughton Theatre
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<i>Director: Derek Dymond</i>	<i>Choreographer: Delia Lee</i>	<i>Musical Director: Sue Tewson</i>	<i>May 2008</i>
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This colourful presentation was both pleasing to the eye and to the ear. The orchestra was well controlled and a joy to listen to. The chorus and principal singing was of a very high standard, and what a pleasure it was to hear every word without the aid of microphones. The choreography was effective and suitable for each change of mood and tempo. Do Morgan as the Duke of Plaza-Toro gave an excellent performance, as did Nicholas Burgess as Don Alhambra Del Bolero. Dave Key-Pugh as Luiz and Suzanne Bunyar as Casilda sang beautifully and their voices complemented each other in their duets. Jon Lewis and Nick Lee worked well together as The Gondoliers. Jon's rendering of "Sparkling Eyes" was well sung and quite moving. Nick's "Rising Early" was also well presented. Helen Bletso can always be relied upon to give a lovely performance. Her rendition of "When a Merry Maiden Marries" was very good. Sarah Phillips was delightful as Gianetta. I was most impressed with Maggie Lobb as The Duchess of Plaza-Toro. Her "On the Day that I was Wedded" was extremely well sung. All the other roles were played and sung. I could not fault any part of this production.

THE SECRET GARDEN	Trowbridge Amateur Operatic Society	Civic Hall
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<i>Director: Paul Butler</i>	<i>Musical Director: Helen Bilkey</i>	<i>May 2008</i>
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With a cast of thirteen women and thirteen men, plus a strong chorus line, this was not an easy musical to stage, but TAOS presented it extremely well. It has numerous scenes, but thanks to the Director's clever design it worked well with continuity from one location to another. The orchestra was well balanced, but at times was too loud when playing under dialogue. The chorus and principals singing was of a very high standard, and there were some great individual performances. Teresa Bray (Lily) sang beautifully and Sean Andrews gave a powerful and convincing performance, singing extremely well, as Archibald Craven. Sam Bunce made a very good Dickon and Andrew Smith proved to be a good actor as Colin. His outbursts of

frustrated anger were very well done. Leonie Harrison was superb as Martha. Her acting and singing was of a very high standard. But the star who shone most brilliantly was Francesca Scott as Mary Lennox. Her clear strong voice in both dialogue and song was exceptional and she portrayed the role with great confidence and understanding. With this adaptation with book & lyrics by Marsha Norman and music by Lucy Simon TAOS achieved yet another success.

OKLAHOMA !	Frome Amateur Operatic Society	Memorial Theatre
<i>Director: Phil Courage Choreographer: Sue McNamee Musical Director: Kerry Bishop</i>		<i>May 2008</i>

This Rodgers and Hammerstein musical remains a firm favourite with societies across the UK with 23 presenting it between March and May. The orchestra provided a well balanced sound for everything from the melodious “Out of My Dreams” to the boisterous “Farmer and the Cowman”. The choreographer produced a variety of appropriate dance routines in keeping with the style required and all were executed extremely well, in particular the lifts by the men. Although Curly sang well he did not impress as a swashbuckling cowboy and was more a poseur. Rachel Lawson as Laurey gave a delightful performance and sang well. Stephanie Hoar gave a 'hardy' well sung Aunt Eller. Dora Bishop was in her element as Ado Annie and did extremely well, singing, dancing and acting her way into the hearts of the audience. Davey Evans did well as Will Parker with strong voice and dancing. Nick Caffreys can always be relied upon to give a good performance and as Ali Hakim he did not disappoint. Andrew Carpenter made a strong Jud Fry and sang “The Lonely Room” powerfully. Nicole Wooldridge made the most of the cameo role of Gertie Cummings and also danced well as Dream Laurey with Alex Green as Dream Curly. Bob Knowles as Andrew Carnes almost stole the show. All his scenes were powerful and he was exactly as this character should be. The chorus singing and acting was of a very special standard and the Director managed to get the best out of them.

CARMEN	Swindon Opera	Wyvern Theatre
<i>Director : Maria Jagusz Choreographer : Judith Hockaday Musical Director : Malcolm Webb</i>		<i>June 2008</i>

This presentation of “Carmen” by Bizet from Swindon Opera with MJ-UK was a feast of good singing. The production was a kaleidoscope of colour and movement. Although there were over seventy in the cast and chorus with twenty seven children, the stage never looked over crowded thanks to very clever positioning by the Director. The twenty nine piece orchestra was always tuneful and well balanced. The scenery designed and constructed by members of the Society was very good and imaginative and the costumes were colourful and appropriate. The dancers performed extremely well in everything they did. The chorus singing was exceptional and quite thrilling. Most of the cast were professional singers from MJ-UK Music and Arts and with such a large cast it would be impossible to name all the artistes but the singing and performances were excellent all round. Particular highlights for me were Carmen’s (Melanie Lang) Habanera, Don Jose’s (Christopher Jacobsen) Flower Song, Micaele’s (Emma Louise) Air and the Quintet by Dancairo, Remendado, Carmen, Frasquita and Mercedes sung by Toby Girling, Carl Malmgren, Melanie Lang, Leigh Rhianon Coggins and Michelle Williams, respectively. The whole production held me spellbound from beginning to end and I congratulate everyone involved for a memorable evening.

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL	Merriman Theatre Group	Norton Hill School
<i>Artistic Director: Graeme Savage Choreographer: Selina Rigg</i>		<i>July 2008</i>

Geraldine Branton reports:-

Merriman had a real challenge on their hands, with their production appearing immediately prior to a 2 weeks’ run at the Bristol Hippodrome! Not to be daunted, they too, had “House Full” notices, with a school hall crammed with enthusiastic audiences for the four-run performance. The company is blessed with an abundance of young, talented performers, so were able to duplicate all the main roles, with the exception of the “adults”, skater dudes and cheerleaders. This must have proved quite a headache for the director, but he did not show it, expertly leading the splendid 4-piece Band from the piano. The cast were well versed in the popular musical numbers and clearly enjoyed the accompanying choreography, which became quite infectious as the production approached its Finale. With a double cast, it is difficult to report on one without seeing the

alternative, but certainly Paul Toulson's portrayal of Troy Bolton grew in stature as the show progressed, delivering a real tour de force portrayal. He was accompanied by Rose Hannay-Davis as Gabriella Montez, playing sympathetically and in fine voice. We were bowled over by Sophie Baxter's Sharpay and Josh Howell playing her brother, Ryan. This quartet provided strong support throughout the show, most ably aided by the two members of staff: drama teacher, Ms Darbus, well played by Fran Horler and Rob Cottrell, forsaking his director's hat for Coach Bolton's whistle. This was a fine effort by all, including the impressive backstage team and wardrobe, who produced the many, varied and colourful costumes. Slower delivery of dialogue by some principals would have ensured a near-perfect production, that was still greatly enjoyed by us all.

TITANIC – the musical	Zenith Youth Theatre Company	Kingswood Theatre
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Director: Scott Rogers Choreographers: Delia Lee & Julie Dallimore Musical Director: Roy Page July 2008

From the book by Peter Stone with music & lyrics by Maury Yeston this intense musical was full of stunning performances and extraordinary singing. Sound and lighting were well controlled and make-up most natural. The band and singing were superb, and the costumes made by members of the company deserve the highest praise. The crew and the First, Second and Third Class passengers all looked so correct and acted accordingly. There were so many thrilling moments, highlights of which were "I have Danced" from Daisy Jorgensen (Alice), "The Proposal/Night was Alive" from Josh Carter & Alex Prescott (Barret & Bride), a most moving "Still" from Jenny Liddle & Lewis Oatley (Ida & Isador) and the incredibly intense "The Blame" from Tim Cooper, James Phillips & Joel White (Andrews, Ismay, Captain). There was not a lot of dancing required, but there were well choreographed, synchronized movements when called for which were well disciplined. This Director is known for his inventive and imaginative presentations and here he surpassed himself. This was a most thrilling and moving theatrical experience.

JEKYLL AND HYDE	Theatre Ink	Swindon Arts Centre
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*Director: Barry Austin Choreographers: Terri Minshull & Glen Wheeler Musical Director: Richard Abrams
July 2008*

With music by Frank Wildhom and book & lyrics by Leslie Bricusse, this was the first production by this newly formed group. Swindon and its surroundings has a wealth of acting and singing talent and much of it was evident in this production. The accompaniment provided by piano, keyboards, bass guitar and percussion proved to be ideal for the Arts Centre. The chorus singing was good and the casting in general also. I would have preferred Dr. Jekyll and Emma to have been nearly the same age to make the story plausible though both presented fine performances. Each character was well defined and sung well. I was most impressed with Michaela Kearns as Lucy Harris. In spite of her profession she extracted sympathy from the audience. Lloyd Morgans gave a sympathetic performance as Sir Danvers Carew and Andy Wells made a fine characterisation as Spider. I was surprised to see there were two choreographers as the only thing slightly resembling a dance routine was when the prostitutes were flapping ribbons. I wanted to enjoy this presentation so much, but, for me, it did not quite make it.

THE MERRY WIVES OF HOLT	Holt Dramatic Society	The Courts
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Director : Christopher Fielden 2008

This comedy by William Shakespeare "with a little bit of help from his friends in Holt" worked extremely well. Set in the fifties, it not only lost none of its humour but in fact added to it. This was played in the open air at the National Trust Property, The Courts in Holt, and it proved to be very entertaining and hugely successful. The Holt Morris Dancers entertained the audience before the play and during the interval. Although it drizzled during the first Act the audience were protected by two awnings and fortunately it had stopped by the interval. There was a cast of twenty five and thirteen delightful small children. In spite of the weather the cast all gave extraordinary performances full of humour and enthusiasm, especially Bob Mizan as Major Sir John Falstaff R.A.O.C. (ret'd), Kate Palmer as Sally Quickly the housekeeper and Andrew Evans - the Vicar of Holt - as Dr. Jerome Caius, a French doctor. This proved to be an excellent production.

RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET Trowbridge Youth Theatre Civic Hall

Director: Wendy Kiddell Musical Director: Phil Springate

August 2008

This musical, loosely based on Shakespeare's "The Tempest" was confidently presented by this youth Group, who displayed a wealth of amazing talent. The MD controlled the fourteen young musicians extremely well. They all played most professionally. In fact they played so well that most of the audience stayed to listen to the "play out" and gave them a long ovation. The very interesting set designed by the director and constructed by Ian Richardson and members of the Society was on four levels and worked extremely well. I was most impressed with Ashley Holman's (Ariel) costume and performance. The way he handled those roller-skates was amazing. Leo Springate gave a great performance as Cookie and his trumpet playing was excellent. Sarah Connew as the Science Officer not only sang well, but proved what a lovely dancer she is. In fact, as; the cast did exceptionally well in all they did. This proved to be another great production, full of movement and energy, and deserving the highest praise. Matt Heaton, the Operations Director, must be so proud of all that this Youth Theatre has achieved... and only in its second year !

42nd STREET Spellbound Frome Amateur Operatic Society (Youth Section) Memorial Theatre

Director: Rosemary Nicholson Choreographer: Emma Hill Musical Director: Kerry Bishop

August 2008

This has to be the most ambitious musical Spellbound has taken on and it proved to be highly successful in every way. The ten-piece band produced all the correct sounds and played well. The lighting was most effective and extremely well controlled and the costumes were superb. From the youngest to the oldest person on stage they wore these costumes like adults and acted accordingly. The singing was of a high standard from both the chorus and principals. The dancing was amazing. The choreographer is to be praised for training the dancers to such a high level, especially in the tap-dancing. No, beat shuffle hop beat for the dancers, but back stepping, side stepping and flares to say the least all executed to a high degree of professionalism. The American accents were well maintained in general, but at times the dialogue was rather rushed making it difficult to understand – something to be watched for the future. All the cast gave extraordinary performances and I congratulate everyone. The director has not merely maintained the good reputation Spellbound enjoys, but has moved it on to further heights.