

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

**“Lost in the Wilderness”**

**district 11  
AUTUMN 2008**

**. REVIEWS . STAGE MUSICALS . OPERETTAS .  
SCENERY .  
. COSTUMES . LIGHTING . VOCAL SCORES .**

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**PETER WHEELDON reports on District 11**

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<b>BUGSY MALONE</b>	<b>Open House Productions</b>	<b>Sir John Colfox School, Bridport</b>
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*Director: Maria Herbert*

*22<sup>nd</sup> February 2008*

It's always a joy to see children and young people acting their socks off and, in this respect, Open House's production of 'Bugsy' was a real treat. Maria Herbert's first-ever attempt at direction was highly creditable in marshalling her large cast through the complex structure of ever-changing scenaria, as demanded by this show, whilst maintaining good continuity and pace. The four principals were very engaging in the portrayal of their distinctive characters. Billy Matthews and Laura Addy as Bugsy and Blousey were convincing and very likeable as romantic leads. Little Alex Hall, reportedly quiet offstage, showed remarkable authority in handling his, much larger, 'hoods', while Charlie Challis was a delightfully slinky Tallulah. Ably backed by teams of mobsters, gangsters and dancers in a cast totalling nearly 40, this was a lively, energetic show, and the supportive audience loved it. Atmospheric music from the 6-piece band in accompaniment did much to contribute to the overall effect. Plaudits too to Stage Manager, Kenny Poole and all the stage, lighting, and sound technicians who were justifiably charged with the unenviable responsibility of setting up in double-quick time and keeping things going during the show. Finally, a mention for the wardrobe ladies whose valiant efforts made this a highly colourful show.

<b>ALL FOR ONE</b>	<b>Burton Bradstock Players</b>	<b>Village Hall, Burton Bradstock</b>
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*Directors: Barbara Powell & Shirley Ewart*

*2008*

Theatre in the round – in the village hall – was the ambition of the Players' Chair and co-director Barbara Powell. Her vision has been most effectively realised with the production of 'All for One', a musical play loosely based on the theme of the Three Musketeers. Choreographed by co-director Shirley Ewart, the large cast of 30+, including 4 actor/musicians, was skilfully deployed over the large stage area, sometimes for multiple sword combat or group song-and-dance routines, and sometimes to depict sequential scenes in different locations by clever use of lighting. The proximity of cast and audience with this arrangement created a kind of informality which served to enhance the play. Much of the action involves three young ladies, Cosette, Yvette and Constance, engagingly played by Emma Batchelor, Gill East and Laura Brown. Richard Chubb, as D'Artagnan, had the lion's share of the male characters, while the three musketeers were duly swashbuckling. Gill Knight showed versatility as both the French queen and the tavern keeper. A strong supporting cast made major contribution to the enjoyment of proceedings. All-in all, it was an impressive production from this village society. Combining both drama and humour to good effect, it was thoroughly

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entertaining and much appreciated by the audience.

<b>FAME FOREVER</b>	<b>Weymouth Operatic Society</b>	<b>The Pavilion Theatre, Weymouth</b>
<i>Director: Julie Storey</i>		<i>27<sup>th</sup> February 2008</i>

Offered the rare privilege of staging a brand new musical show in amateur form before it enters the professional circuit, WOS seized the opportunity eagerly and turned it into a dazzling production. ‘*Fame Forever*’ is the sequel to the well-known ‘*Fame*’ story, jumping ahead 20 and 30 years to track the fortunes of original graduates and later generations of students. So new is the show that changes from originator David De Silva continued to flow within days of opening night, but director Julie Storey rose to this, and all other challenges to deliver a highly polished and entertaining performance. She assembled a superb cast of principals and young dancers, of such quality throughout that space precludes inclusion of all names deserving of mention. Suffice it to say that patrons could be excused for thinking that they were watching professionals at work. Musical accompaniment in the style familiar to ‘*Fame*’ fans was expertly provided by husband and wife team Matthew and Heather Reed aided by their 9-piece band. Ably supported by Production Manager Patrick Sutton and all his teams behind scenes, this was a highly colourful show, in all senses, demonstrating a pioneering spirit of which the society can be justly proud.

<b>THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC</b>	<b>WOW Youth Musical Theatre</b>	<b>The Pavilion, Weymouth</b>
<i>Director/Choreographer: Scott St. Martyn</i> <i>Musical Director: Heather Reed</i>		<i>27<sup>th</sup> March 2008</i>

**John Cummings** reports:-

This ‘song and dance’ event included an interesting compilation of musical numbers and provided a very pleasant evening of entertainment. The highlights of the first half were a well-executed tap dance routine to ‘I’ve Got Rhythm’, an excellent Sondheim solo ‘Being Alive’ by Adam Nash and the ‘Hairspray’ section, (the best in the show), which provided us with ‘Good Morning, Baltimore’, with a lively performance by Beth Rose, and a good solo, ‘I Know Where I’ve Been’, by Jenny Galloway. The second half was also interesting with a lovely solo from ‘Miss Saigon’, ‘Bui Doi’, sung by Josh Rose, and an amusing version of ‘Cell Block Tango’ from ‘Chicago’. The entire company performed throughout the show with great energy and enthusiasm to chalk up yet another ‘plus’ from this talented group.

<b>LETTICE AND LOVAGE</b>	<b>Amateur Players of Sherborne</b>	<b>Digby Hall, Sherborne</b>
<i>Director: Patricia Harris</i>		<i>28<sup>th</sup> March 2008</i>

This was an accomplished presentation of Peter Shaffer’s comedy by the Players. Although billed with a cast of eleven, the play is all about two characters who dominate the vast majority of the action. First in line is stately homes’ tour guide Lettice Douffet, a part of Herculean proportions superbly played with exquisite expression, inflexion and gesture by Fizz Lewis. Lettice relieves the repetitive nature of her work by mixing fact with fantasy, her imagination stimulated by occasional resort to lovage – a potent ‘country cordial’. Following closely is her, initially severe, supervisor Lottie Schoen, beautifully played by Christine Yardley, who fires Lettice for her flirtations with the truth, but progressively mellows in her company and, aided by an introduction to lovage, eventually embraces the fantasy world which, thereafter, they enjoy together. It is a long, quite wordy, play and to their immense credit, these two ladies held the audience in rapt attention from beginning to end. Charles Napier’s three sets coupled with some excellent lighting from Adrian Hole complemented the action very well. A nice touch was the bicycle and street scene viewed through the window of the basement flat. Another production of which APS can be justly proud.

<b>FOUR PART HARMONIES</b>	<b>Weymouth Operatic Society</b>	<b>Hope Church, Weymouth</b>
<i>Devised by Geoff King, Hilary Langmead, Virginia Croad &amp; Judie Sheldon</i>		<i>2<sup>nd</sup> April 2008</i>

With their production of ‘*Fame Forever*’ occupying the first prime spot in 2008, Weymouth Operatic organised a second event shortly afterwards to showcase the many talents of its more operatic members. This took the form of a comprehensive concert performed by twenty three singers in all. Everyone was in very fine

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voice, and the audience enjoyed a most entertaining evening of well-chosen music to suit all tastes. With excellent accompaniment on keyboard by John Crocker, the programme ranged from gospel songs to hit numbers from modern musicals, and from Gilbert & Sullivan, represented by a potted version of *The Mikado* and an extract from *Ruddigore*, to a section of classical chorus pieces from *Carmina Burana* and grand opera. Masterminded overall and conducted by Geoff King, who condensed *The Mikado* down to thirty minutes, and also sang two fine solos himself. The Gospel Songs and Modern Musical sections were compiled and directed by Hilary Langmead and Judie Sheldon respectively. Virginia Croad compiled the Classical Moments. There was some superb solo singing from Stella Brading and Patrick Sutton, as well as a delightful duet from *Ruddigore* by Lynne and John Mullins. This highly-accomplished musical presentation following so closely behind 'Fame', clearly underlined the considerable versatility of the society.

**FIDDLER ON THE ROOF**

**Swanage Musical Theatre Company**

**Mowlem Theatre**

*Director: Brenda Ridout Musical Director: Isabelle Butler*

*10<sup>th</sup> April 2008*

Under experienced direction from Brenda Ridout, the company celebrated its name change from Swanage Operatic with renewed spirit and certainly one of its best productions in recent times. The cast of over forty showed considerable strength in depth, and there were a number of notable performances. Rob Atkins as Tevye, with strong voice and a hint of Topol, was ably supported by his stage wife, Roni Merison, and their three captivating daughters played by Karen Woolley, Victoria Jones and Emma Whiting. There were polished character parts from Julia Gadenne, the matchmaker and Stewart Jones, the tailor, and a promising debut from Thomas Parker, the student. The classic crowd scenes at the inn, the dream sequence and the wedding were skilfully choreographed and extremely well played. The Musical Director handled the complex score and her large orchestra with aplomb. Designed and built by Peter Cooper, the setting was superb, instantly conveying the ramshackle village and adroitly accommodating the various scenes with the minimum of furnishing. Nooks and crannies gave much scope for dramatic lighting by Ian Cheeseborough. It is good to see accomplished productions created entirely from resources within, and this was a fine example of what amateur groups can achieve without resort to professional packages.

**SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER**   **Encore Theatre Club**   **The Arts Centre, Bridport**

*Director: Paul Skelton*

*22<sup>nd</sup> April 2008*

This was yet another competent production from the Encore stable. A classic period romp, the action rattled along with much animation and great pace. Drawing on a surprisingly deep pool of acting talent for a relatively small community, the director fielded a strong cast all round. Two ladies I recall from their performances in 'Steel Magnolias' took prominent parts. Hilary Bosworth, as the rumbustious Mrs Hardcastle, and Andrea Prentice, equally at ease as demure daughter Kate or as raunchy barmaid, were excellent in their roles. Dewi Lambert's portrayal of George Marlowe, oscillating between gibbering incompetent in the company of fine ladies and amorous gigolo in the company of wenches, was splendid. And it is to Jean-Paul Draper's credit that Tony Lumpkin, the cause of all the trouble, was engagingly mischievous. Sound performances too from John Surry as Hardcastle and Louise Hardy as Constance were worthy of mention. The atmospheric set was the latest in a long line of creations from Tony Anthony who had just celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. The many and varied period outfits set a stiff challenge for costumier Sheila Saddington which she met in admirable fashion. A good show in all respects from Encore.

**THE HOUSE BY THE LAKE**

**The Purbeck Players**

**The Mowlem Theatre, Swanage**

*Director: Gail Green*

*29<sup>th</sup> May 2008*

In this day and age, when the popular media peddle an extensive menu of sophisticated TV thrillers that are much enhanced by technology and modern camera techniques, the revival of a stereotyped stage thriller of the 1950s has to be a risky venture in terms of audience appeal. However, the Purbeck Players gave it their best shot on all fronts and, in the process, presented a creditable production. According to the programme notes,

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the director wanted to explore the effect on the original portrayal of characters and relationships when transposed to today's standards and behavioural attitudes – a tall order for the cast in a play that really does not stand the test of time very well. Nevertheless, the tale was told, with some conviction, by the nine members of the company. Doing much to assist the proceedings on stage was a comprehensive set, representing a contemporary version of the living room in the house by the lake, designed and constructed by Peter Gutteridge. In summary, this was a genuine and thoughtful attempt to superimpose the values of the past on modern times and, as such deserved better support from the people of Swanage than it got.

**LES MISÉRABLES – School Edition**

**WOW Youth Musical Theatre**

**The Nothe Fort, Weymouth**

*Director: Scott St. Martyn    Musical Director: Heather Read*

*30<sup>th</sup> July 2008*

Following their successful production in April 2007, WOW staged a repeat showing, this time in the open air, at the atmospheric and entirely appropriate setting of Weymouth's historic Nothe Fort. As before, the show ended with the audience on its feet whooping with delight at this highly accomplished performance. All the good things I wrote about the 2007 show were there in abundance, but these qualities were even further enhanced by the additional maturity and dramatic effect of this production. Once again, the principals were quite superb including, for the second time, Josh Rose, now a veteran at the age of 15, Lewis Asquith, Beth Rose, Shakira Brading, Grace Osborn and Joseph Butcher, as well as impressive debuts from Alex Foott, Jenny Galloway and Jack Goodwin. The leading junior roles from Clare Phelan and Josh Brunell were delightful. The open-air setting was simple but effective – a large stage bounded by haphazard structures which served to form the barricade and behind which coloured lighting and smoke added authenticity to the battle scene. Director & Musical Director (whose only view of the stage was via closed circuit TV), and the WOW production team, must have been justifiably pleased.

**LORD ARTHUR SAVILE'S CRIME**

**Burton Bradstock Players**

**Village Hall**

*Director: Mike Read*

*3<sup>rd</sup> September 2008*

The laid-back village hall atmosphere belied the quality of the production as the Players presented their version of this comedy that would have stood up well in any established theatre. The action moved along with good pace and continuity, slowing only a trace towards the end of this long, 2 ½ hour play. But such was the engagement of the players with the audience that time passed un-noticed. The Director had assembled a highly competent cast, each of whom clearly established their distinctive characters. There were no weak links in this chain. Richard Chubb cut an elegant figure revelling in his portrayal of the naïve aristocrat. Baines, admirably played by John Surry with exquisite timing, was the inscrutable gentleman's gentleman while a mischievous Chris Roberts added much colour as the incompetent anarchist. All supporting parts were excellently played and made great contribution to the success of the production. The period set was well conceived and diminished only by a pair of double doors with a will of their own. All scenes were beautifully dressed and a credit to those responsible for the extensive wardrobe. Perhaps a little appropriate incidental music between scenes would not have gone amiss. I loved the usherettes' pillbox hats!

**CHESS**

**Weymouth Operatic Society**

**The Pavilion Theatre, Weymouth**

*Director: Julie Storey*

*Musical Director:*

*24<sup>th</sup> September 2008*

**Nick Lawrence** reports:-

“Chess” is one of the biggies with its mix of passionate drama and demanding singing. To the listener the score is huge, rather like “Turandot”, and for the cast the drama is emotionally draining and relentlessly demanding. Under production team's careful guidance WOS took on the challenge with obvious delight. Despite the constant interruptions of the scene changes, the pace was well maintained and the long first act flew by. One of the wonderful things about “Chess” is the chance to stamp your own interpretation on the work. This means that, like playing Shakespeare, every production is unique to the company. The organisation of the black & white wardrobe with the graded addition of some colour worked extremely well and successfully complemented the powerful set. The groupings were well designed and ensured that no scene

was repetitious. Some of the scenes were set too far upstage for the audience to really relate to what was going on and subsequently some of the humour, so well pointed by the director and played by the cast, was not as immediate as it could have been. Every now and then the music is expected to overwhelm the audience with wave after wave of passionate emotion. This was never achieved with the small band reliably in support role and the characterisations on stage slightly underplayed. Disappointing though this was, it did mean that the audience heard every word so perhaps this was wise. The whole presentation was led by some very competent principals whose dedication to musical accuracy slightly inhibited their characterisations. While I can understand the decision to go for safety, I should have preferred to see more daring.

## **John Cummings**

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of recently retired Regional Representative and Honorary Life Member of the Association, John Cummings.

### **A few words from National Vice President & Councillor for Noda South-East**

John Cummings what can I say ? John was a stalwart of the old NODA Southern Area Committee having been a representative for 33years. At the re-organisation he retired. He received his Hon Life Membership of the Association after 25 years as a representative and carried on to serve his region for a further 8 years. He was a lovely man and will be sadly missed by all his friends and anyone who knew him on or off stage. I had known him since I joined the Southern area committee in 1980 and always found him pleasant, helpful and willing to do what was required for his region. He was always welcome on his visits to societies and the area days, and I shall miss him a great deal.

Thank you John for the time we had together on the Noda Southern Area Committee.

*Margaret Coltman  
and all the members of the old Southern Area.*