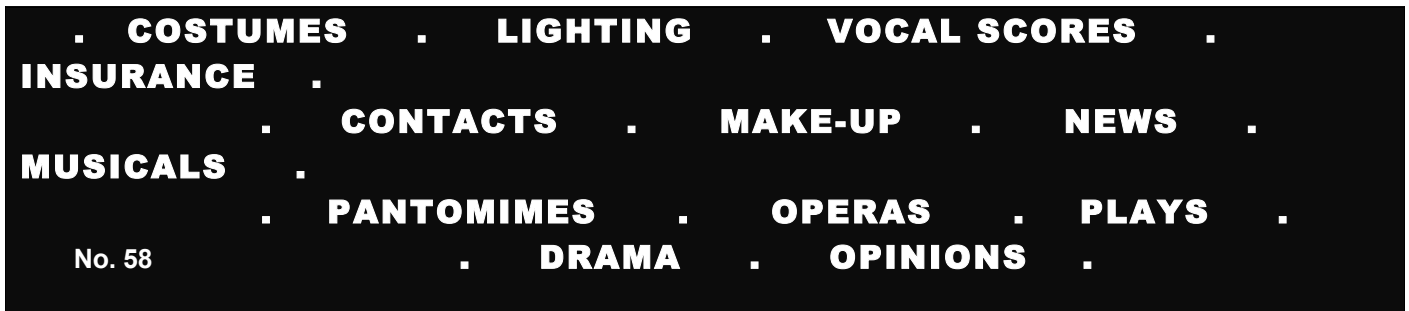


*National Operatic & Dramatic  
Association  
South West Amateur Theatre  
Magazine*

**“Lost in the Wilderness”**

**district 13  
AUTUMN 2008**

**. REVIEWS . STAGE MUSICALS . OPERETTAS .  
SCENERY .**



**SHARON WOOD reports on District 13**

The Pirates of Penzance	Winterbourne Musical Theatre	The Railway Children	Bradfordians Dramatic Society
Children of Eden	St. Mary's Players	84 Charing Cross Road	Saltford Drama Club
The Pirates of Penzance	Bristol Gilbert & Sullivan Society	Mack and Mabel	Western Opera Players
Little Shop of Horrors	Bristol Musical Youth Productions	Kiss Me, Kate	Bristol Amateur Operatic Society
La Perichole	Bristol Opera	Trial by Jury & H.M.S. Pinafore	Bristol Catholic Players
Bath Gang Show 2008		As You Like It	The Bradfordians Dramatic Society
A Chorus Line	Bristol Amateur Operatic Society	Tick, Tick, Boom !	Theatreworx Limited
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**THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE Winterbourne Musical Theatre Winterbourne, Bristol**

*Director: Maggie Williams Musical Director: Heather Wren Accompanist: Katie Robson April 2008*

This was Gilbert & Sullivan as I have never seen it before. The traditional story with all the familiar songs sung beautifully and as they were originally written, but with so many extras, both visual and spoken, that it was difficult to know where to look for fear of missing something. A fast paced production that had the audience joining in with the songs, (which were accompanied by a very talented and accomplished pianist), a good use of the stage and auditorium, deckchairs, barbeques, Frederic's deodorant, drunken pirates, and even an extra verse for 'The Modern Major General' (incorporating i-pods, mobile phones and 'Strictly Come Dancing'), when the Pirate King, (quite rightly) observed that he wasn't very modern at all. All set within the original time of the piece, which made it even funnier and played absolutely straight by the cast, this was a very effective and highly animated production. Superb portrayals by Tony Worgan (Pirate King), Mark Beardmore (Frederic), Gerry Milward (Major) and a wonderfully camp Sergeant of Police (Mike Couzins) who minced his way through all of his scenes with remarkable finesse. Wonderful scenery incorporated a huge pirate ship, a split level stage, and excellent stone work ruins in Act 2, complete with huge stuffed owl. Costumes were colourful and in keeping with the era, highly effective lighting was varied and always spot on cue. Vocals, dialogue and characterisations were all splendidly delivered and great fun was had by all. A superb evening's entertainment that we really didn't want to end and that will stay in the memory for a long, long time! Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan themselves would have loved it! Absolutely Superb !

**THE RAILWAY CHILDREN [adapted Dave Simpson]  
 The Bradfordians Dramatic Society St. Lawrence School, Bradford on Avon**

*Director: Phil Courage 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2008*  
**Rich Newman reports:-**

The story is well known from the television programme and I wondered how well it would transfer to the stage. Well, if this production is anything to go by, very well indeed. The set was doll's house-like with the middle opening up to reveal the family home. When closed this was the railway building. The character of Perks, the station master, played by Ian Harding, also acted as narrator. The narration was delivered DSR next

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to a points lever that he pulled as we had a change of scene from Station to house. The story was set locally, so we had a splendid contrast of accents between the 'local' and railway children. The 'meeting' scene between them was excellent and it was great to see younger actors so at home and in command of the stage. The Mother (Helen Sanders) perfectly portrayed the varied emotions that this part calls for. The costumes looked perfect, as did the props. There was some delightful lighting throughout, particularly the night and tunnel scenes. Dry ice and sound effects were used to good effect at the station as the steam trains pulled in, giving a waft of smoke on the platform and through the station door. I waited for my favourite 'Daddy' line at the end from Bobbie- superbly played by Lauren Clinch, and then it came. What an amazing piece of theatre! A train arrives, smoke fills the doorway amidst the night light and as the smoke clears, we see the children's Father standing there and with perfect timing the line is delivered- "Daddy ! Oh my Daddy !". Not a dry eye in the house. A wonderful evening.

<b>CHILDREN OF EDEN</b>	<b>St. Mary's Players</b>	<b>Redgrave Theatre, Bristol</b>
<i>Director: Steve Woolley    Choreographer: Jane Priddes    Musical Director: Paul Woolley    March 2008</i>		

'*Children of Eden*', based on the book by John Caird with music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz tells the story of the Creation in Act 1, whilst Act 2 deals with Noah and the Ark. The main theme is the relationship between parents and children; and in the right hands this can be an astonishing piece of theatre. This production was just that, with some superb performances, most notably Father (Pete Woolley), who brought true sincerity to this difficult role, Adam/Noah (Craig Broadbear), Eve (Ruth Tavener), Cain/Japeth (John Webber) and Yonah (Jacqui Woolley). The entire company was on stage throughout the production and the concentration of everyone was amazing. Simplistic scenery and costumes worked well helping to highlight the difficult score and the dramatic content beautifully. Lighting was atmospheric and direction was excellent, keeping the action flowing at a good pace whilst managing to maintain just the right amount of stillness and poignancy when the plot demanded it. An excellent and thought provoking production.

<b>84 CHARING CROSS ROAD</b>	<b>Saltford Drama Club</b>	<b>Saltford Hall, Bath</b>
<i>Director: Madeleine Bils    April 2008</i>		

'*84 Charing Cross Road*' a book by American Helen Hanff, published in 1970 and adapted for the stage in 1981 by James Roose-Evans, tells the story of a twenty year correspondence between Helen and Frank Doel of Marks & Co., antiquarian booksellers located at the titular address in London, England. In the main, a two hander and a very wordy play that takes great concentration and characterisation. Saltford's production was a tour de force. With two superb leads, Dusty Walker (Helen), and Rodger Fowler (Frank) giving measured and impressive performances, along with a host of bookshop employees, scenery and props evocative of both bookshop and brownstone apartment in America, and costumes ever changing to acknowledge the passing of the years. All the humour and pathos was well drawn and the pace was never allowed to slip, giving us an excellent production that was truly mesmerising.

<b>THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE</b>	<b>Bristol Gilbert &amp; Sullivan Society</b>	<b>Redgrave Theatre</b>
<i>Director: John Telfer    Choreographer: Joan Walke    Musical Director: Eric Wetherell.    April 2008</i>		

It has been suggested that the idea for the plot of '*The Pirates Of Penzance*', was sparked off by the fact that Gilbert had been captured by a gang of Italian brigands at the age of two and had been ransomed for £25! Whether or not this is true, 'Pirates' is certainly one of the best loved and most tuneful of the Gilbert & Sullivan Operettas and Bristol G & S Society's version of it was a very colourful and traditional production. Strong characters, excellent orchestration and vocals, beautiful scenery, splendid costumes and an atmospheric lighting plot came together in a charming and commendable production. Adrian Cooper (Major General Stanley) gave an imposing performance, as did Allan Bennett (Frederic), Liz Wetherell (Ruth), and Rachael Cooper (Mabel). Aided and abetted by a very laid back Pirate King (Iain Arnold) and a motley crew of Pirates, Policemen and Daughters, the familiar storyline and well loved songs were woven into a show that everyone enjoyed, both cast and audience alike.

**MACK AND MABEL**

**Western Opera Players**

**Redgrave Theatre, Bristol**

*Director: Neil Baker Choreographers: Catherine Price and Lizzie Hudson Musical Director: Matthew Nash*

*April 2008*

'Mack and Mabel' is a show based on the true story of silent film director Mack Sennett and actress Mabel Normand. Set in the '20's and 30's it tells of ambition, unrequited love, jealousy and intrigue and is, in essence, a very sad tale, though the show has been re-written to give it a happy ending. However, the music (probably best known to many from Torvill & Dean's gold medal winning performance at the 1982 World Figure Skating Championships), brings the gaiety and glamour of the '20's to the story and there are many opportunities for comedy, all of which were fully realised by this production, (The Keystone Cops were hysterical!) Western Opera Players really brought this musical to life, with excellent characterisations, superb production numbers and vocals, glorious costumes, and imaginative lighting effects. It was nice to see some new faces in the principal roles; in particular Steve Gunning (Mack), who performed with great understanding of the character and Joanne Skyner (Mabel), with a captivating portrayal of our heroine. Sue Davis (Lottie Ames), Neil Baker (Frank Wyman) and Terry Maggs (Roscoe Fatty Arbuckle) gave sterling support as did all the principals and chorus alike. The back projection of the 1920's film stills was excellent and we were even treated to a 'home made' silent movie, complete with titles! The finale was inspired and very moving, with the whole company presenting roses to Mack and Mabel, and quietly leaving the stage through the auditorium. A wonderful ending to an accomplished and highly enjoyable production.

**LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS Bristol Musical Youth Productions Redgrave Theatre**

*Director & Choreographer: Vicki Klein. Musical Director: Sean Green*

*April 2008*

'Little Shop' is a black comedy with a rock musical score, updated by BMYP to New York 2008. A wonderful split set, incorporating the flower shop and a New York Street with a skyscraper backcloth, set the scene for this weird and wonderful story. The pace was fast, choreography imaginative and slick, superb characterisations and vocals from principals and chorus alike, colourful costumes and some excellent lighting effects. Captivating performances from Madeleine Smith (Audrey 1), Simon Camp (Seymour) and Guy Hughes (Orin), led the talented and enthusiastic cast of youngsters (and some not so young!) through this improbable and fantastic story. The real star of the show was Audrey 2, the ever hungry plant, that was a magnificent specimen, created by Ria Walker, played by James Carrier and voiced brilliantly by Jamie Hughes. A colourful and creative production that was enjoyed enormously by cast and audience alike!

**KISS ME, KATE**

**Bristol Amateur Operatic Society**

**Victoria Rooms, Bristol**

*Director: Hilary Marshall. Choreographer: Lizzy Westney Musical Director: Kerrie Duce.*

*April 2008*

Inspired by William Shakespeare's 'The Taming Of The Shrew', 'Kiss Me, Kate' was first performed 60 years ago and with music and lyrics by Cole Porter, is always sure to be a winner. This production was no exception. Characters were established quickly and the story unfolded with a good pace and plenty of action. Choreography for the dance routines were outstanding, particularly 'It's Too Darn Hot', which could easily have graced any professional stage. There were some excellent performances by Pete Jones (Fred), Charlotte Wheadon (Lilli) and Natasha Green (Lois), with hilarious portrayals of the Gangsters by Jake Chew and David Cain and strong support from the whole cast. Scenery, costumes, lighting and orchestrations were highly commendable, all coming together to give an impressive and accomplished production that was really 'Wunderbar!'

**LA PERICHOLE**

**Bristol Opera**

**Olympus Theatre, Bristol**

*Director: Catherine Slicer Musical Director: Arne Kovac*

*May 2008*

Bristol Opera's production of 'La Perichole' or *The Street Singer*, by Jacques Offenbach, was a very entertaining piece of theatre with wonderful orchestrations and choral singing, led by their very talented conductor and Musical Director, Arne Kovac. Originally in French, the society chose a translation consistent

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with Offenbach's original that would appeal to the modern audience. Set in Lima, colourful sets and costumes, with some excellent characterisations, brought the story to life, with every effort made to make the most of the comedic elements of this delightful operetta. Commendable portrayals from all the principals, in particular Elizabeth Armstrong (La Perichole), Hamish Brown (Piquillo), Julian Fox (a very creepy Don Andreas!) and a wonderfully camp performance by Guy Withers (Panatellas), which was a joy to watch, along with a hearty and enthusiastic chorus, gave us a charming and accomplished production.

**TRIAL BY JURY & H.M.S. PINAFORE**

**Bristol Catholic Players**

**Newman Hall, Bristol**

*Producers: Louise White (Trial) and John Laycock (Pinafore) Musical Director: Geoffrey Wickham May 2008*

'*Trial By Jury*' is the only Gilbert and Sullivan opera played in one act and the only theatrical work by them, without spoken dialogue. The characters have to be established very quickly and Bristol Catholic's production did just that. With a beautifully panelled court room as their backdrop, the jury and the public filed in under the watchful eye of the Usher (an impressive portrayal by Chris Marsh), with excellent interaction throughout. Jonathon Toffolo (The Defendant) and Charlotte Wheadon (The Plaintiff) both gave excellent performances, battling out their differences with the Judge (Philip Lewis) 'getting the girl' in the end. A very accomplished production visually, with splendid vocals and orchestration.

'*HMS Pinafore*' was brought into the 1920's and a superb ship deck backcloth, complete with ocean liner in the background (which lit up in Act 2's night scene). The pace was good and the familiar songs were sung with obvious enjoyment and vigour! Wonderful characterisations, particularly from John Laycock (Sir Joseph), Derek Griffen (Captain), Jonathan Edwards (Ralph) and Louise White (Mrs Cripps) kept the action flowing, along with an excellent chorus, who did much to enhance the production. Lots of humour and pathos was wrung out of the complicated plot, which, with its usual twist, left everybody living happy ever after.

**BATH GANG SHOW 2008**

**Kingswood School, Lansdown, Bath**

*Production/Musical Director: Adrian Cottle Assistant Director: Trevor Cook*

*Choreography Director: Kate Tamblin May 2008*

2007 was an extremely busy year for Bath Gang Show, as they took part in the Centenary Celebrations by performing at the County Jamboree, the World Jamboree and LIVE '07, making national and international news. How then they found the time to devise, rehearse and produce the Gang Show 2008, I really can't begin to imagine, but here it was, bigger, better and even more enjoyable than last year! The sheer enthusiasm and energy which come from these young (and not so young) people, both on and back stage is always infectious and stimulating. The hard work that so many people obviously put into this show really paid off, particularly on the technical side, which this year was truly spectacular. The lighting and effects were absolutely stunning and did much to enhance the whole production. From the smallest and the youngest to the more mature performer, they sang and danced their hearts out, giving us a diverse range of hilarious sketches, song and dance, a potted version of 'Blood Brothers' and a wonderfully moving rendition of 'From A Distance' complete with signing for the deaf, to name but a few items in this packed programme. A hugely enjoyable evening, which was a joy for me to share.

**AS YOU LIKE IT**

**Bradfordians Dramatic Society**

**Dorothy House, Bradford On Avon**

*Director: Simon Blacksell*

*July 2008*

Set in the beautiful gardens of Dorothy House just outside Bradford On Avon, which gave us the perfect Forest Of Arden, the Bradfordians' production of 'As You Like It' was a polished and highly enjoyable version of Shakespeare's comedy. The rain kept off, the lighting took us from dusk to dark with wonderful lighting effects and floodlit trees etc, whilst the sound department even managed to overcome the very loud bleating of a flock of sheep in the adjoining field! Characterisations were all superb and a great understanding of the text was evident, particularly from Rosalind (Keely Beresford), Touchstone (Graham Billing), Corin (Anthony Forsyth) and Jaques (David Gosling). The action was never allowed to flag, entrances and exits made full and

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effective use of the natural walkways in the garden between the trees and shrubs, the original music composed by Kate Courage was well played by a youthful quartet and the maypole dancers were delightful. The actors succeeded in conveying the comedy, pathos and drama which this production demands, in equal measure and presented a very special and memorable production.

<b>A CHORUS LINE</b>	<b>Bristol Amateur Operatic Society</b>	<b>Olympus Theatre</b>
<i>Director: Paul Dyson    Choreographer: Lizzie Westney    Musical Director: Matthew Tilke</i>		
<i>July 2008</i>		

A show with lyrics by Edward Kleban and music composed by Marvin Hamlisch, with nineteen main characters, set on the bare stage of a Broadway theatre during an audition for a musical, it provides a glimpse into the personalities of the performers, the choreographer and the director, as they describe the events that have shaped their lives and their decisions to become dancers. The only set dressing being floor to ceiling mirrors, which were very cleverly lit. The stage otherwise was bare and used to full effect by the performers all of whom gave well defined characters that we could really believe in. It would be unfair to single anyone out in the production. The cast worked superbly well as a team and brought out the humour, tragedy and pathos of the piece, along with stunning choreography and vocals, giving us a real idea of the joys and heartaches of auditions. A highly commendable and thought provoking production.

<b>TICK, TICK, BOOM !</b>	<b>Theatreworx Limited</b>	<b>Olympus Theatre, Bristol</b>
<i>Director: Geraldine Gregory    Choreographer: Steve Blackmore    Musical Director: Sean Green.</i>		
<i>May 2008</i>		

‘*Tick, Tick, Boom!*’ is the autobiographical story of Jonathan Larson, who died of an undiagnosed aneurysm in 1996, on the eve of his hugely successful musical, ‘*Rent*’, previewing off Broadway. It deals with a struggling composer, Jon (Steve Williams in a stunning performance), living in New York, whose girlfriend Susan and best friend Michael (wonderful portrayals by Vicki Chilcott and Simon Gregory – not only playing these roles, but sundry other characters along the way!), both seem to know where they are going with their lives, whilst he is still working as a waiter and trying to write a musical. A difficult and complex musical with unfamiliar songs, this had to be a huge challenge for any group, but true to form, Theatreworx rose to the challenge and gave us a production that was entertaining, poignant and thought provoking. A striking and imaginative set, back lit by the entire spectrum of colours and giving numerous acting areas, cleverly incorporated the band, expertly led by Sean Green. Acting, dialogue and vocals from the three immensely talented performers were confident and believable, a credit to the superb direction of Geraldine, who had managed to produce a baby the previous night and *still* be back in the theatre for this evening’s performance, with beautiful new babe in the dressing room! *That’s* dedication!!!! Congratulations to Geraldine and Simon on the birth, and to all those involved with ‘*Tick, Tick Boom!*’, yet another new and exciting production, which I’m sure will capture the imagination of many groups in the future.

<b>THE HOUSE BY THE LAKE</b>	<b>The Woodland Players</b>	<b>Our Lady of Lourdes Hall</b>
<i>Director: Jenny Payne    Assisted by Kathy Matthews</i>		
<i>July 2008</i>		

**Geraldine Branton** reports: -

This three act play, by Hugh Mills deals with the serious subjects of psychiatry, suicide, hypnotism, blackmail, murder and complicated relationships. Set in a living-room, not far from London during the 1940’s the play contained all the ingredients for a good drama, with the additions of suspense, atmosphere and impeccable acting from the cast. As the main protagonists: disgraced doctor, Maurice Holt and Janet, his wife, Neil Baker and Sharon Wood excelled, building the tension gradually, drawing us in to the unraveling family structure, to the emotive and moving climax. Bravo! Supporting this duo, Trudy Fenton as Maurice’s sister Stella had the unenviable task of divided loyalties between her brothers and of being a permanent resident in her sister-in-law’s home. She coped well, adding her support to Richard Prior’s evil younger brother Colin, his glamorous young wife Iris, played by Laura Sibley and David Matthews as detective Mr Howard. Both David and Richard stepped into their respective roles just two weeks before the opening, due to accidents within the cast, ensuring the ultimate success of the production. A splendid set, evocative music before each act, subtle lighting and a well-dressed cast, entirely in keeping with the period, enhanced our enjoyment. A special

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mention must be made of the vocal variations and excellent diction, from the Colonel's Etonian "Old-Boy" to the maid, Brenda's twittering.