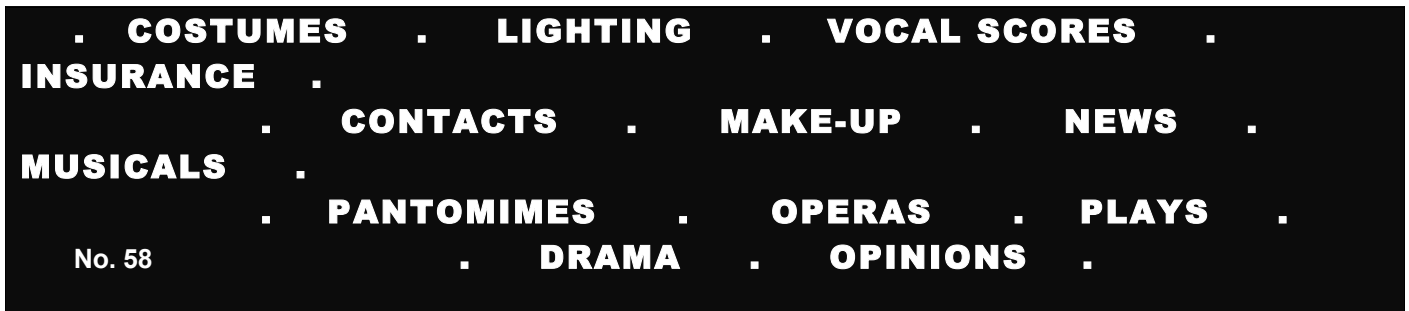


*National Operatic & Dramatic
Association
South West Amateur Theatre
Magazine*

“Lost in the Wilderness”

**district 15
AUTUMN 2008**

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



MALCOLM WHITE reports on District 15

Goldilocks & the Three Bear	Thornbury Musical Comedy Club	Sailor Beware	St. John's Players
Sweet Charity	Dursley Operatic & Dramatic Society	Life Begins	Sodbury Vale Musical Comedy Club
Carousel	Manor Players of Tewkesbury	Into the Woods	Cotswold Savoyards

GOLDILOCKS & THE THREE BEARS	Thornbury Musical Comedy Club	Armstrong Hall
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Director: Dorothy Wrench Choreographer: Julia Edwards Musical Director: Roger Winter February 2008

This pantomime is not done as often as most, so it was refreshing to see something different. It very cleverly started with Fairy Buttercup, competently played by Janet Frost, relating the story of the Three Bears with the aid of a huge book which acted as a screen for silent movie style film. We were then transferred to the village square to be greeted by a colourful and enthusiastic company. The costumes were vibrant with colour and in true panto style throughout. Congratulations to a hard working wardrobe team. As always with this society, the sets were imaginative and designed to give maximum space on a small stage. David Wrench Jnr and company made a superb job of the artwork, and the crew were pleasingly undetected during the scene changes. The lighting was atmospheric and the plots smoothly executed. The four piece band was admirably led, and entered the spirit of the evening fully by joining in the banter and egging on the cast. The choice of music was perfect, as the songs aptly interconnected with the story. Julia Edwards made an excellent job of the choreography, keeping it simple and polished. Lizzie Lindsell and Kate Harding were well matched as Eddie and Goldilocks respectively, both putting everything into their performances. Geoff Kitchen (Squire Samuel Solomon Slytherine Smythe) looked excellent in his ‘Snape’ like attire and gave a good, all-round performance. However, I would have liked him to have been a little more menacing. The outrageous Dame Delilah was energetically and expertly played by David Wrench Jnr., with wonderful facial expressions and a commanding presence on stage. Gary Kennedy was well cast as Tommy Tucker and the Three Bears were delightful. Judging by the young people around me, this pantomime hit just the right spot.

SAILOR'S BEWARE	St. John's Players	St. John's Hall, Churchdown
[Philip King & Faulkland Cary]		

Director: Judi Bond March 2008

Any young man considering Holy Matrimony should not see this play! Set in the fifties, it tells of a young man’s insight into married life on the eve of his wedding. Unfortunately, his future Mother-in-Law is the queen of battleaxes and rules everyone with an iron rod. The script is very well written, extremely funny and St John’s Players certainly did it justice. Unfortunately, the leading lady was taken ill at the dress rehearsal, so the role of Emma Hornet was taken on at the eleventh hour by Pam Stock. My heartiest congratulations must

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go to this very talented and experienced actress. She gave such a strong performance that we forgot that she was using the book. The whole company were well chosen and each gave a confident performance with well defined characters. Jenny Morgan was superb as Edie Hornett. Her timing and expressions were wonderful. The audience really related to her as the bullied, timid relation always trying please, but never quite managing it. Henry Hornett, the long suffering, hen-pecked husband, was beautifully underplayed by Philip Barber; and Jackie Barber-Smith was suitably irritating as the nosey neighbour Mrs Lack. The remainder of the cast portrayed their characters with conviction, and well done to Peter Walker (Carnoustie Bligh) for maintaining a believable Scots accent. The set, designed by Mike Barwick, was excellent and dressed to represent the period perfectly. It was enhanced by the attention to detail placed in the choice of props. This was a terrific evening's entertainment.

SWEET CHARITY	Dursley Operatic & Dramatic Society	Lister Hall
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Director: Craig Hewlett Choreographer: Lesley Holland & Jade Morrissey Musical Director: Roger Winter
May 2008

'Sweet Charity' has a special memory for me, as it was the first musical I appeared in as an adult. It is so well written with some excellent one liners and a superb score. I attended the opening performance of this production and expected a few first night hitches, but no such gremlins were apparent to the audience. The company had a change of director fairly late on in the rehearsals, but the team work of this society paid off. Craig Hewlett took on the role of director, and did well to restore the motivation and enthusiasm of the cast. His insight into the script was evident in the highs and lows in the action, and he produced a fun and lively show. He created some beautifully tender moments between Charity and Oscar. The lift scene was particularly well done. The orchestra hadn't quite got to grips with the difficult score, but I'm sure this would have settled by the next performance. The choreography was not quite in the Fosse style, but some interesting movement enhanced the main numbers. The costumes were correct for the period and Mike Graham's sets were, as usual, inventively thought out and well painted. The talented cast was led by Emma Hitchins (Charity) who gave a confident, exuberant performance. She was matched by a very sensitive John Marshall as Oscar. The remainder of the cast were enthusiastic and worked hard to keep the pace of the piece going. In summery, this was a fun production which worked well and left the audience feeling that they certainly had been given their monies worth.

LIFE BEGINS	Sodbury Vale Musical Comedy Club	Town Hall, Chipping Sodbury
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Director: Michaela Crumpton Choreographer: Wendy Weaver Musical Director: Chloe Allsopp-Jones
May 2008

Congratulations to Sodbury Vale Musical Comedy Club on their 40th anniversary – hence the very apt title of the production. When developing a celebratory production, it would be easy to slip into a selection that satisfies personal memories. This certainly was not the case here. The choices made provided a varied and interesting programme with something that would appeal to all tastes. I very much enjoyed the projected narrative and potted history between the sections. It was professionally presented and gave a good balance between factual information and the introduction to the next section. The sets, designed and constructed by Tony and Nigel Hodges and crew, were cleverly thought out ensuring changes were smoothly and quickly executed. There were some nice lighting touches that enhanced the mood and complemented the sets well. Costumes comprised of red tops and black trousers, always a striking look, with the occasional 'add on' to depict the particular show. The choreography was slick and polished. Wendy Weaver created some lovely pictures and choreographed to the abilities of the cast. It is so often forgotten that not everyone is a trained dancer, which results in under-confident performance. The four piece band worked well together, and appeared to be enjoying the music put before them. The Director is to be complimented on a first class evening's entertainment. It is not easy to produce a show such as this. One has to pre-empt the audience's tastes and maintain their interest. This was done with full marks. I was delighted to see the youth section so well represented and integrated with the adults. Their talent will ensure the future of this society.

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CAROUSEL

Manor Players of Tewkesbury

George Watson Memorial Hall

Director: Kim Gough

7th May 2008

Rich Newman reports:-

This show bounced into life right from the start with a lively and busy opening. The set was simple but effective. Great thought had been given to detail. It was good to see the sea on the back drop through the opened shack door for example. The props were good too. The costumes were colourful and individually varied and always in keeping with the period. Malcolm White (Billy) and Tracy Sweeting (Julie) soon had the audience with them and they quickly portrayed their feelings for each other. Billy changed from charm to nasty very nicely. His Soliloquy also showed a great sense of feeling, natural movement and subtle changes of light and shade. Another high spot vocally was 'You'll never walk alone' sung by Lin Willerton (Nettie): this was a very controlled performance and piece of singing from this experienced actress - not a dry eye in the house. Julie looked just right and had had a suitably naive character. Jigger (Peter Hughes) made the perfect side-kick in crime and had good song projection. The chorus were very strong and it was delightful to see so many men and children. I did feel that the lighting was very dark at times. Particularly noticeable at the clambake when it should have been a lovely sunny day! The three strong orchestra deserve a special mention: a really full sound balanced and at no time over powering the singers. There was an excellent build to the tearful end and it rounded off a very enjoyable evening.

INTO THE WOODS

Cotswold Savoyards

Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham

Directors: Duncan & Helen Hooper

Musical Director: Allan Gillespie

June 2008

I have always found Sondheim a bit hit and miss in his writing. Some of his work I rave about, others I find hard going and confusing. So, as I had never seen this show, I was hoping it would be the former. I have to say I loved it. I thought the concept was different and interesting. The difficult score was mastered extremely well by this very talented cast, under the superb leadership and direction of Allan Gillespie. The trademark discords of the composer are not easy to put across, but they confidently attacked the task ahead and won. The direction team of Helen & Duncan Hooper is to be congratulated on bringing the whole thing to life. They utilised the strengths of the well chosen cast and created a first class evening's theatre. There were some excellent comic scenes that rested comfortably alongside the gentle, poignant moments and gave the show its light and shade. The lighting design was imaginative and atmospheric, which complemented the simple set. The experienced company worked well as a team and were headed by a very strong principal line up. Hannah Cottell was outstanding as the witch, and Paul Scott's comic timing in the role of Jack was faultless. This actor knows how to judge his audience and works them well. Johnathan Dyer and Kate Bennett gave secure performances as the Baker and his wife, whilst Ben Perkins and Gregory Aston provided excellent light relief as the two Princes. Everyone involved in this production had obviously worked extremely hard to meet the challenge, which they did with flying colours.