

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

**“Lost in the Wilderness”**

**district 4  
AUTUMN 2008**

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**KISS ME, KATE**      **Kingsbridge Amateur Theatrical Society**      **Village Hall, Malborough**  
*Director/Musical Director: Jamie Fraser*      *Choreographer: Sonia Manning*      *March 2008*

This company continue to benefit from the immense contribution by Jamie Fraser. This is a difficult show for a small company, but carried off very well indeed. The new version of the show was presented. Having directed this new version myself I am not certain if it is an improvement on the older version or not as some of the company work has been removed. Once again the home designed and constructed scenery was superb and set the scene well for a very capable cast to perform a fast paced show. The two leading roles are notoriously difficult, but managed wonderfully by Cathy Alston and Steve Watson. The entire principal line up had been well rehearsed, with the Shakespeare sequences that can so easily befuddle an audience, well presented with clarity. Company numbers were well drilled and this was a show with plenty of pace. Jamie’s orchestras are always a joy to listen to (12 players) and I am always amazed that this group can present such shows, worthy of a much bigger venue, in this village hall.

**ALADDIN**      **Brixham Operatic & Dramatic Society**      **Brixham Theatre**  
*Director: Jane Barnby*      *Choreographers: Lindsay Hampson, Tracey Williams & Rachel*  
*Musical Director: Kaitey Milner*      *23<sup>rd</sup> February 2008*

**Stuart Lyddon reports:-**

Direction allowed for the cast to explore and cultivate a real ‘Spirit’ with colour and ‘life’ in all characters, ensuring that the atmosphere was never lost and movement around the stage, purposeful and constructive. With celebrity references, tongue-in-cheek humour and short punchy songs, this production had the integral elements of Panto fun and mayhem. The chorus work was well portrayed in voice and movement allowing for all abilities to display their talents, with musical direction and choreography most assertive with the demands of the show. Aladdin captivated the Principle Boy attitude, ‘Princess Mandarin’ was an enchanting Principle Girl and ‘So Shy’ comically paired up with a cheeky ‘Wishee Washee’. The set was a creative mixture of the mystical Far East and the Egyptian wealth, nicely animating the stage area with colour and depth. The lighting designs lit each scene with desired effects whether full stage or front-of-tabs with colours blending appropriately. The wardrobe department dressed all participants with rich colours and appropriate styles. The make-up team added their all-important touches making the oriental picture complete. I always tend to listen to audiences on leaving every auditorium, so I’ll leave you with a quote from one contributor, “Lively and cheerful”, I need say no more.

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<b>HELLO, DOLLY !</b>	<b>Dawlish Amateur Operatic Society</b>	<b>Shaftesbury Theatre</b>
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*Director: Marilyn Adams    Choreographer: Paula Smith    Musical Director: George Carter    May 2008*

Bravo Marilyn, George and Paula! I found this to be the best balanced and presented Dawlish show for some time. My previous gripes about hairstyles and general chorus presentation, and thin musical support, were heeded. This time, everyone looked right. The choreography was well drilled and suited the piece and was attractive as were the dancers themselves. The chorus were more than just a static backdrop, actually engaging in the production for once. Home designed scenery worked well on this tiny stage, and costumes were very attractive. Direction ensured a fast pace, and there were some well observed and entertaining performances. The other great thing was that for once here was a sizeable band that gave a very good musical support. The young 18 year old MD is already proving to be a formidable musical talent and his contribution to this show was paramount. The entire team are to be congratulated on a show that was a fitting celebration of 50 years.

<b>WEST SIDE STORY</b>	<b>Paignton Operatic &amp; Dramatic Society</b>	<b>Palace Theatre</b>
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*Director: Maggie Campbell    Choreographer: Tracey Loveridge    Musical Director: Colin Waller    May 2008*

It was always going to be a tough job to follow last year's Excellence Award Winning "Les Mis" but follow it they did. Not often performed due to the requirement for a young vocally secure cast, this production hit the mark. There were bags of energy, a very good pace, and some superb performances. The choreography was well thought through. It lacked final polish, but that didn't matter as it gave these sequences a raw feel that suited the story. The leads gave strong portrayals and I am not going to single anyone out as they were all so good. The simple set of scaffolding gave different levels and suited the atmosphere created. The band was once again out of sight behind the stage, but well sound re-enforced and played magnificently. Maggie directed with a sure hand moulding her talented company into a well drilled entity. This production was also proof that if the material is to their liking, young folk, especially young men, will turn out in their droves. An object lesson to many groups. Now the challenge is to hold onto them !

<b>THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE</b>		
	<b>Torbay Gilbert &amp; Sullivan Society</b>	<b>The Little Theatre, Torquay</b>

*Director: Nigel Hickman    Choreographer: Jane Mackay    Musical Director: Bob Carter    May 2008*

Once again, Nigel directed with tongue very firmly in cheek, and the result was a hugely entertaining romp through one of the better known G&S Operas. I loved the policemen appearing from a Tardis, the pirates presented as leather clad "bikers", Ruth appearing from a cake, and the surreal appearance of a dalek whizzing across the stage. Anything went in this production, but mixed into the pot, hey presto, it worked. The superb orchestra was offstage right and sound balance was perfect. Singers were well supported and musically the show was in good fettle. The traditional scenery was in direct contrast to the decidedly untraditional presentation, but it mattered not. Once again, this company, not especially strong on younger performers, played to its strengths, successfully disguised any weaknesses, and presented another very entertaining evening. They demonstrated that G&S can be treated with cheeky irreverence and humour to make it more palatable to today's audiences. The traditionalists may balk, but if it brings in the audiences, who cares !

<b>RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET</b>		
	<b>Totnes Amateur Operatic &amp; Dramatic Society</b>	<b>Civic Hall, Totnes</b>

*Director: Jill Bruley    Musical Director: Dave Holland    May 2008*

Let me start with a simple statement – "I loved this production". I was wondering how Taods could present this show, but I need not have had any worries. Jill Bruley directed a blinder and the cast rose to the occasion. The superb home designed set fitted the bill perfectly with lights, monitors, knobs, and video screens. It needs to be imaginative, and it was. Dave was just the right MD to bring the 60's and 70's music to life with his excellent band, and the cast obliged. Vocally the evening was a resounding success. All the principals gave of

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their best. It was nice to see Gilly Anderson back as Gloria and she was well partnered by Dave Waistnidge (Prospero), Martin Poveda (Bosun), Andy Gould (Tempest), Hannah Baxter Freeman (Miranda) and especially James Gordon (Cookie). This company even went one better than many others by having two of the principals play instruments on stage (as in the original professional version). I could quite easily have sat through all this again. Bravo Taods, one to remember.

<b>KING JOHN</b>	<b>Dartington Playgoers</b>	<b>Private Gardens, Dartington</b>
<i>Director: Jonathan Hales</i>		<i>June 2008</i>

When I heard the choice for this year's Dartington Open Air production I, like so many others, responded "What?" To be truthful this Shakespeare heathen had never heard of this play. It was an interesting choice therefore, and sadly, not supported by audiences. With the themes of political manoeuvring and murder, a corrupt church, forced marriage and easy treachery, Jonathan Hales presented his players in a very highly organised way as if they were pawns on a chess board. Emulating the political and confrontational nature of the piece, the characters movements were stylised and specific. I felt this did lead to a rather visually boring production. However the upside was that we were forced to listen rather than look and thus the unfamiliar plot was easy to follow. I wondered if any cuts had been made to the script as the presentation was surprisingly short. As usual here, all performers were outstanding and there were some wonderful performances. It is always a joy to watch the playgoers at work and this was no exception.

<b>BEDAZZLED</b>	<b>Newton Abbot &amp; District Musical Comedy Society Juniors (Newts)</b>	<b>Coomeshead College Theatre</b>
<i>Director: Claire Shakesheave</i>	<i>Choreographer: Claire Robinson</i>	<i>July 2008</i>

The talented junior section of NADMCS settled in well at a venue new to them. This production, set at a drama school, was written by both Claire's and bore a passing resemblance to "Fame" in many ways but allowed them to use music sequences from a number of well-known musicals. The huge cast were well drilled and, as usual, very well disciplined. The older performers took the main roles and proved, once again, what a huge pot of talent there is here at Newts. There were outstanding contributions from Amy Parnell, Matt Doyle, Jasmine Kewell, Ted Stockton-Smith and Dom Thomas. In the full company scenes, everyone was given something to do which avoided rows of static bodies and created interest. Music was pre-recorded but this worked very well. Claire Shakesheave is proving to be a very capable director and I am full of admiration for her abilities in running Newts (as an ex-Newt herself) and Claire Robinson is proving a very capable choreographer. Newton's future is in good hands.

<b>PASSION</b>	<b>APT Creative</b>	<b>The Little Theatre, Torquay</b>
<i>Director: Rob Walling</i>	<i>Choreographer: Joanna Bryan</i>	<i>August 2008</i>

A difficult and rarely performed piece, this fledgling company, with their first performance, displayed the promise of big things to come. All the more impressive is that they did it all in just four weeks (circa 16 rehearsals) to avoid clashes with other local groups. This isn't an easy piece for audiences, who are required, as with so many Sondheim creations, to listen. It isn't an easy story either. The central characters are not attractive personae, and they don't act in attractive ways either. The central female role is a neurotic and virtually stalks the object of her affection and ultimately causes his emotional downfall as well. David Youll and Vicky-Jo Eva were impressive and well supported by a first rate company. The simple set was effective for the job and the wonderful orchestra, off stage, supported well. The real stars of this piece were the director and musical director. I am truly gob smacked that they managed to pull off so difficult a piece in so short a time.

**MY FAIR LADY**

**Toads Stage Musical Company**

**Princess Theatre, Torquay**

*Director: Iain Douglas    Choreographer: Aubrey Budd    Musical Director: John Amery*

*July 2008*

**Lynne Caygill reports:-**

What a pleasure to come to the Princess Theatre to see a production and be able to hear every word. The change of sound designer (Adam Waller) was certainly a good move as the balance of sound for this show was excellent. This company always put on high quality performances. They have a lot of talent and experience to draw on, so it is for this reason I feel I can be a little extra critical. The opening scene lacked conviction. It is set outside the opera house at the end of a performance on a rainy night. The star cloth at the back rather took that away and there was not enough hustle and bustle. The men should have been rushing from the theatre entrance hailing taxis and then rushing back to shelter their ladies under umbrellas, it therefore lacked the impact this show needs at the start. The Costermongers looked far too clean and well dressed, not a bit of dirt to be seen anywhere. These were supposed to be the poorer people who had been out in the rain all day and the ladies looked as if they were in their Sunday best. However the other costumes were magnificent. The choreography was very well performed and very safe. I feel that this company has the capabilities to be stretched to do more sophisticated routines. The orchestra played well and the balance with the singing was excellent, but the chorus needed to be careful with some of the high notes as they were sometimes a little flat, particularly in the Ascot Gavotte. Lynsey Dart playing Eliza was a star; she never put a foot wrong and obviously enjoyed playing the role. Mrs. Pearce (Julie Hale) played a charming, motherly character which I felt was much better than the rather stern portrayals I have seen in the past. Doolittle gave a strong performance with very good comic timing and Maggie Campbell as Mrs. Higgins was perfect for the role. Higgins and Pickering both gave strong performances and all were well supported by the smaller roles. The show was slick and had pace, very necessary for a production as long as this and was very well received by the audience.