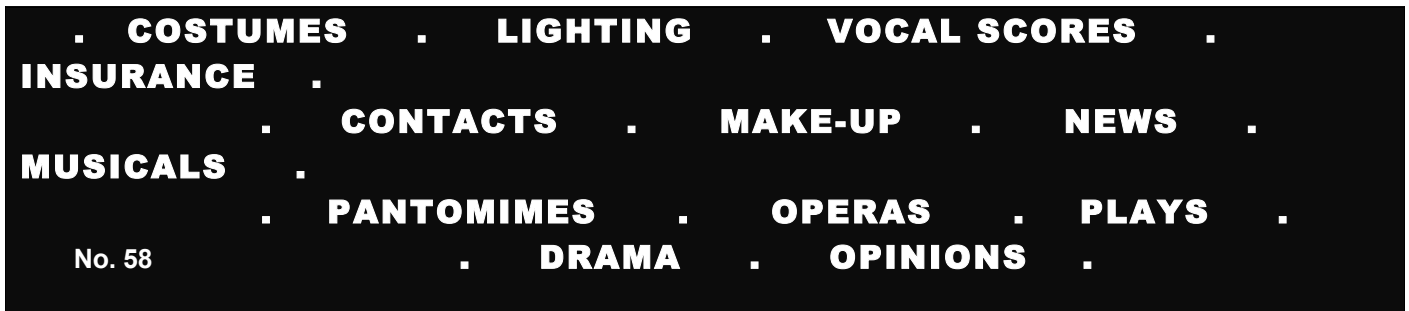


*National Operatic & Dramatic
Association
South West Amateur Theatre
Magazine*

“Lost in the Wilderness”

**district 5
AUTUMN 2008**

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



LYNNE CAYGILL reports on District 5

The Lion in Winter	The Exmouth Players	The Dreaming	Centre Stage
Broadway Pirates	Crediton Operatic & Dramatic Society	South Pacific	Exmouth Musical Theatre Company
Godspell	Colyton Theatre Group	That's Centertainment	Centre Stage

THE LION IN WINTER [Goldman]	The Exmouth Players	The Blackmore Theatre
<i>Director: Barbara Pentecost</i>		<i>14th March 2008</i>

This play tells of the rivalry between Henry II and his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine and the conflicts between their sons, Richard, Geoffrey and John as they vie for power. Although set around a fictional Christmas “get together” the play has accurate historical background. I had seen and enjoyed this play before so I knew I was in for a real treat. The play was very well cast and it was evident from the start that all the characters had a good rapport with each other. In particular Nick Lawrence (Henry II) and Pat Cowey (Queen Eleanor) sparked lines off each other and both gave superb performances. Jake Philp-Parsons was Philip of France. He played this character well and was a complete contrast to the fiery Henry. The three princes, Richard (Andy Jury), Geoffrey (Phil Cornelius) and John (Sam Pike) all played completely different characters. Richard was petulant and moody, Geoffrey was contemptuous and patronizing and John arrogant and childish. All were convincingly and powerfully played. Alais was well performed by Leila Ellis. She came over as a sweet gentle character at the start but you soon realized she was a match for those around her. The play is written in a classical style and the lines need to be spoken with a rhythm and this was very well achieved with very clear diction by all cast. The set was clutter free and worked well, although I would have liked some music played between scenes as it had been at the start of the play. This play with its contrasting emotions and subtle humour was most interesting. It was an excellent performance by all the cast and was greatly appreciated by the audience.

THE DREAMING	Centre Stage	The Pavilion Theatre, Exmouth
<i>Director/Choreographer: Sue Bonnett</i>	<i>Musical Director: Jeremy Rawlings</i>	<i>April 2008</i>

This was an enchanting show, excellently performed by the members of Centre Stage. “The Dreaming” is based on Shakespeare’s play “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” with music by Howard Goodall and lyrics by Charles Hart. The set was very effective, magically lit with a design by Ian Whilden which formed the right background to the earthy colours of the costumes. This is by no means an easy show to perform, with its Shakespearean dialogue and extremely challenging music, the cast must have worked extremely hard to reach such an exceptional standard of performance. It was very well cast with superb performances by all, including the very animated chorus of woodlanders. The cast was ably led by Duncan Taylor playing the part of Jack.

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He was lithe and energetic and fitted this part perfectly. Emma Bateman was Sylvia, Queen of the Woodlanders and Perry Meadowcroft was Angel, The King. They sparked off each other and both sang well, particularly, Emma whose strong singing has a lot of potential. The Villagers, led by Gareth Phare as a confident Rev. Herbert Plum provided some excellent comedy. They threw themselves into the parts, they had good comic timing and gained obvious enjoyment from their performance. Other strong performances came from. Ami Gibson(Jennifer), Charlotte(Grace McNeil) and Hennrietta(Hannah Caygill) all sang extremely well. They were very ably supported by Sean Mabin(Julian), Alexander(Charlie Leigh) and David (Sean Mulkerinn) all of whom played convincing characters. This was a show I had not seen before and I would like to congratulate Centre Stage for tackling something different. It is a great pity they did not get the support it deserved, because they put on a tremendous production. I for one appreciated it greatly and went back for a second performance.

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE [Broadway] Crediton Operatic & Dramatic Society Queen Elizabeth Lower School
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<i>Director: Joe McNulty</i>	<i>Musical Director: Nick Lawrence</i>	<i>16th April 2008</i>
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This was a very lively and energetic production, which kept the audience captivated from start to finish. The experience started as you walked through a cave decorated the treasure chests and then entered the hall to a ship on a Cornish beach. The ship housed the band and provided a descending entrance for the cast. The show started off with a miniature galleon being carefully steered around the Cornish coast, (which had been painted on the floor) which caught our attention for the show to start. The pirates made a loud and exciting entrance with a raucous opening chorus and confident singing from Chris Barlow who was playing Samuel. Mike Canning put all his energies into the part of the Pirate King and gave a very bold and assured performance. Sarah-Jo Nuthall was Ruth and her rich velvety voice was a joy to listen to. Ben Edcombe made the part of The Sergeant of Police all his own. It was an amusing unique performance which the audience really enjoyed. Penny Daw (Mabel) and John Burgoyne (Frederic) both gave excellent performances. They had a good rapport with each other and their singing was superb. Frederic's solo "Oh, Is There Not One Maiden Breast" was the best rendition I have heard for a long time and to hear a Mabel who was capable of singing top notes that soared beautifully above the chorus was such a welcome change. The three girls, Edith, Kate and Isabel were highly amusing and had the most wonderful facial expressions. The Director ensured that all the cast understood the humour in this show and took part in it, making it very evident to the audience. It was one of the funniest Pirates I have seen. The set was worked very well and was lit most effectively. The lively band was kept tightly in control and supported the singing without overpowering them. It was a most entertaining evening.

SOUTH PACIFIC	Exmouth Musical Theatre Company	The Pavilion, Exmouth
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<i>Director: Joe McNulty</i>	<i>Choreographer: Debra Butler</i>	<i>Musical Director: Nicky Perry</i>
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June 2008

Iain Douglas reports:-

Faced with the difficulty of finding scenery to fit this awkward stage, Joe elected to have filmed back scenes. Made specially on location, the result was visually stunning. Full colour, cinema sized moving back drops against which to perform. It was an experiment that worked wonderfully. This show is very much of its time, although the central theme of racial prejudice is still very pertinent today. It is lengthy, so pace of direction is vitally important and provided here. Annabel Sayers and Mark Smith worked well together as the leading characters and I was impressed with their performances. It is tempting to overplay roles with a comic slant, but while Bloody Mary sang beautifully, her performance was so pantomime in style as to spoil any realism. This is a show that demands a young company. The forces wouldn't have taken personnel over a certain age so a few of the female company should have questioned their own presence in this cast. The lack of men detracted from the impact of the Nothing Like a Dame sequence, but those we did have were lively and full of energy. Musical support from an excellent pit band ensured another evening of high quality entertainment.

GODSPELL	Colyton Theatre Group	St. Andrew's Church, Colyton
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Director: Chris Williamson Musical Director: Grania Coleman

July 2008

Nick Lawrence reports:-

A young intelligent director with a mostly teenage cast was a recipe for an energetic performance and that's what we were given. What a joy to see this wonderful show given a youthful breath of fresh air in the wonderfully suitable setting of Colyton's beautiful church. With some good strong singing and a sympathetic backing Stephen Schwartz's vibrant score was well served although the safe tempi did take away somewhat from the natural exuberance. The professional band was alert to every rubato that the action dictated. The vaudeville nature of this show with its varied vignettes offers the director and cast plenty of opportunity to be innovative and display their many skills. The production team had seized on this, and the entr'acte to Act II with the actors sharing their instrumental skills was a most impressive example. The director employed many theatrical games, styles and improvisations to make the whole presentation spellbinding for the audience. He was aided by a receptive cast who fearlessly shared the experience. The full church gave a resounding and deserved reception to a piece of contemporary and moving theatre. The audience knew it was in for a good evening after the enthusiastic and heartfelt welcome given by Father Nicholas, and the cast, band and production team delivered. No wonder he was so delighted to have them use his church.

THAT'S CENTRETAINMENT	Centre Stage	Pavilion Theatre, Exmouth
<i>Director/Choreographer: Sue Bonnett</i>		<i>2008</i>

With the increasing cost of putting on major shows, concerts are a good way of making much needed funds. Centre Stage put on four concerts throughout the summer to do just this and they proved to be a great success. The concerts included music from west end shows and included numbers that are not heard very often. It was interesting to hear music that was a little different alongside the more popular numbers. The company were full of their usual exuberance and the performances were energetic and enthusiastic with interesting choreography. Concerts can be a useful tool to give people a chance to take part in solo or group numbers, when they do not usually have the chance in major productions, I would have liked to have seen more evidence of this in these concerts. My congratulations to all the company who worked very hard to give their audiences very exciting performances.