

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

“Lost in the Wilderness”

**district 6
AUTUMN 2008**

**. REVIEWS . STAGE MUSICALS . OPERETTAS .
SCENERY .
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HICKORY DICKORY DOCK	Lyme Regis Pantomime Society	Marine Theatre
<i>Director: Ken Loader Choreographer: Hazel Cawte Pianist: Penny Bartholomew</i>		
<i>February</i>		

What a mixed bag this production was, with its content merrily strung along, between the delightful, potential to be good and the not so good moments. The society have a tendency to use the same format every year. Fine - “if it ain't broke don't mend it”, but this production showed more than a few cracks. Cast worked hard to establish their characters, with some more successful than others. Pace, forgotten lines and timing proved to be an issue with staging almost non-existent. Couples singing and delivering speech in front of blacks, for lengthy periods of time, did nothing to stimulate visually. Delightful as ever, the younger generation brought energy and charm to the show, confidently displaying their considerable dance abilities. Costumes, designed and made within the society, consistently present as 'top drawer' quality; this year being no exception. To be fair this performance was First Night, with some problems no doubt improving as the week progressed. All the time in the world, however, could not change the quaint, tired feel that infringed this production.

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL	Tiverton Junior Operatic Club	New Hall
<i>Director : Kev Behan Choreographer : Kathy MacMillan Musical Director : Andrew Curtis Feb</i>		
Michael Simpson reports:-		

A society needs confidence in their ability, to stage a show held in such high esteem by 99% of the teenage population, (or so it seems). Anything less than fabulous would not be acceptable. In this production, cast energy appeared in overdrive, movement effortless with adrenaline oozing from every pore of every body. Casting was excellent, characters played with confidence, all able to leave the audience in no doubt of their ability to connect to their role as perceived in the film. A four piece group, their musicianship entertainment in itself, helped capture the modern flavour of the show, albeit at a price. One liners were lost on occasion, while some numbers not including full company, struggled to be heard. Solos performed with maturity and emotion, along with all other aspects of this show were finished off beautifully. A lively, loud finale finished the performance as it had stared, not one cast member was seen to lose concentration or flag. My thoughts on the show were so obviously echoed by the foot stamping, enthusiastic full house. Fabulous.

ANYTHING GOES	Sidmouth Arts Club Operatic Society	Manor Pavilion
<i>Director : Brian Rees Choreographer : Vicky Salter Musical Director : Dorothy Worthington March</i>		

The number of times I have seen this show is now well into double figures. Its thinly veiled, forward plot,

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snappy one liners and the sophistication Cole Porter calls for, are just a few of the reasons it remains a popular choice. On this occasion the director had obviously worked hard with his cast, being well rewarded for his efforts. Casting was first class, their antics totally infectious, complemented by a super chorus. Humour featured foremost in this production, with Sir Evelyn Oakleigh (Alec Fellows-Bennett) portraying the epitome of an aristocratic fop, his facial expressions almost funnier than the spoken word. A prime example of talent came from two of the most hilarious Chinese characters seen before in this show, (certainly by me, anyway), very little dialogue was needed, an occasional Chinese sounding retort and gesture resulted in a very entertaining and almost telepathic partnership. The part of Reno was tailor made for Donna Heard, an animated, personable portrayal showed warmth and sauciness with strong vocals and dance ability to boot. Vocals produced an excellent sound with clear phrasing, although timing was left wanting in some numbers. An energetic, classy production.

OKLAHOMA !	Lyme Regis Operatic Society	The Marine Theatre, Lyme Regis
<i>Music & Staging: Nick Lawrence</i>		<i>15th May</i>

As with all large, sunny American musicals we have come to expect froth, frill, fun and fright, not necessarily in that order. Fun and fright were obviously apparent, other aspects not quite so without being missed in the slightest. Despite his, just past the first flush maturity, John Challis (Curly) brought a boyish charm to the stage. His relaxed approach was ideal, singing and moving with ease. With her supposed indifference clear to see, Laurey (Kelly Street) displayed a tomboyish persona with enough femininity to also attract the attention of the tormented, frustrated Jud; who along with Curly displayed drama and pace as they foolishly bid all they had for the woman they loved. Tracey Dare was Aunt Eller from the top of her head to the tip of her toes. Her turn of phrase drawing laughter at all times. Nicky Harwood (Ado Annie) rose to the challenge admirably with love interest Will Parker, Scott Robson playing a confident role and dancing well. Lisa Quick (Gertie) ensured she was noticed with a laugh resembling a piercing scream, which saw audience members jump on more than one occasion. The suitable choreography paled into insignificance compared to the very amusing dancing eyebrows of Harry Harrison (Ali Hakim). They appeared to have a life of their own. An extremely tight, balanced orchestra produced the exact level of sound to support some encouraging vocal work including the strong, well staged “It’s a Scandal” and the animated harmonic “Oklahoma!”.

THE FULL MONTY	Sidmouth Musical Comedy Society	Manor Pavilion
<i>Director/Choreographer: Sue Bonnett Musical Director: John Amery</i>		<i>June</i>

“The Full Monty” hypothetically speaking could also be referred to as “the complete package”. Question being, did any members of the cast fulfil their quota ? Confidence was rife amongst the sexes, with sassy attitude oozing from the ladies. Accents were convincing with voices well suited to the demanding score. Technically there appeared an imbalance on sound levels with feedback on occasion and an untimely filter cleaning prompt flashed on the back projection screen during a particularly poignant number, extremely helpful to those of us with a filter problem. Lighting did not escape the gremlins either, frequent shadowing appearing on various areas of the stage. Costumes (particularly female) looked very British with an eighties feel, distracting from the required American ambience. These issues are an unusual occurrence with this society. That said, nothing could be taken away from the cast, who produced some fine acting. Characters, believable played with sensitivity without losing the humour; all able to develop the contrasting personalities so crucial to the story. Particularly enjoyable moments were the duet from Georgie & Vicki “You Rule My World” with beautiful harmony and a heartfelt and touching performance of “You Walk With Me” sung by Malcolm – spine tingling. Topped off by a light-blinding finale (drat, timing was perfect) all left smiling and fully satisfied.

RELATIVE VALUES	Sidmouth Amateur Dramatic Society	Manor Pavilion
<i>Director : Hilary Hatherley</i>		<i>June</i>

Although not a fan of all Noel Coward’s work, this is one I have enjoyed in the past. Class is a constant

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preoccupation for every member of the household, so when it is discovered the young Earl of Marshwood is bringing home his fiancée, a famous Hollywood actress, who also happens to be the estranged sister of “Moxie”, servant to the Countess of Marshwood, Moxie’s decision to leave, unwittingly sets in motion the plan which will see his fiancée for the false, gold digger that she is. Filled with wonderful one-liners and situation comedy, mostly laid at the door of Felicity, Countess of Marshwood (Sandria Stewart), who was confidently played with just enough haughtiness to emphasise her standing without losing that hint of a soft heart. Contrast between the dowdy Moxie and her sister Miranda needed to be more emphatic, physically and verbally. Americans are renowned for being O.T.T. across the board, this was missing. Style was not. An elegant set left no doubt of the social standing of its occupants. Performance of the evening must go to Alice the “dippy” maid (Celia Monck), a wonderful character, played to perfection. Despite performances such as these, a lot was left wanting, action heavy going with stilted delivery at times. A lot could be learnt from taking on board a conversation heard in the break, between two gentlemen of the audience. “We’re not getting a lot of laughs, are we. It’s meant to be funny”. “No, it’s because speech is too soft and spoken too fast”. Something to digest in the future.

THE LADY IN THE VAN	Studio Theatre	The Warehouse, Ilminster
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Director : Rose Wigmore

June

A play written by Alan Bennett; based on his relationship with Miss Shepherd, an eccentric lady, who lived in a broken down Bedford van parked on Bennett’s driveway. The story of their relationship is told by interaction between a younger and older Bennett, who talk, disagree and argue with each other while telling the story, of which the younger is directly involved. Casting was spot on, the age difference and appearance of the two Bennett’s was as good as it gets. Alan Bennett’s distinctive voice and intonation was easily recognised, no doubt helped along the way by the services of the dialect coach, as listed in the programme. Dialogue audibility was excellent, fluency and strength of delivery, however, was an issue. With neither actor able to fully command the stage. The subject of the play, Miss Shepherd, (Romy Eyre) was portrayed brilliantly, her cantankerous, manipulative eccentricity performed with control and as much realism to almost smell the body odour. Supporting cast contributed the majority of humorous dialogue with good effect, bringing a much needed light hearted feel to the occasional blackness. Costumes and set helped create the scenes particularly well, as did the beautifully constructed, authentic looking “Bedford”. Lighting was not as kind, slow to react with cross fading failing to glamorise the moment. This thought provoking production certainly deserves merit, but late exits and entrances caused a considerable loss of pace and substance, lowering the standard from that which was richly deserved