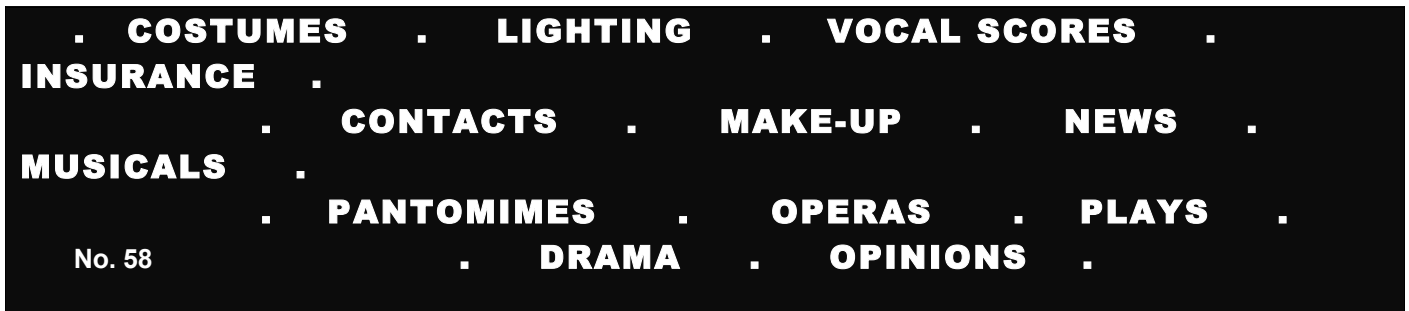


***National Operatic & Dramatic
Association
South West Amateur Theatre
Magazine***

“Lost in the Wilderness”

AUTUMN 2008

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



DIANE GILCHRIST reports on District 7

High School Musical	Barnstaple Young Generation	Oliver !	Barnstaple Amateur Operatic Society
Witness For The Prosecution	Torrington Players	The Witches of Eastwick	Braunton Productions
Plaza Suite	Actors of North Tawton		

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL	Barnstaple Young Generation	Queen's Theatre
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*Director: Kev Behan Choreographers: Maralyn Williamson & Helen Cole Musical Director: Malcolm Read
17th April 2008*

This Musical based on a Disney Channel Movie proved to be a box office success for this very talented group. How wonderful to see “sold out” signs at least one month before opening. Very rewarding for all concerned. The show opened rather slowly but soon gained momentum, although unfortunately the dialogue, especially from the male characters was somewhat lost and made the story (for those of us who weren't familiar with it) difficult to follow. The girls overshadowed the boys and also outnumbered them which is very often the case in am-dram, but the boys certainly came into their own in a very well choreographed basketball scene. Most of the principals played their parts with great confidence, and appeared to be really enjoying themselves, but some of the boys seemed to be less than happy with their roles, and appeared slightly out of their comfort zone. The choreography was excellent, especially in the Finale, when everyone without exception moved at the right time and in the right direction, not an easy thing to achieve. The sets were good, and congratulations must go to the stage crew who carried out the changes quickly and efficiently. The lighting was excellent as were the special effects. The costumes were bright and cheerful, but varied slightly in style, and make-up was in some cases over-done. The musicians made their presence felt, but at times overpowered the weaker soloists. (Unusual for this group). The front cloth was emblazoned with an E, and I'm sure this stood for Energy, Enthusiasm and Exuberance: all of which were evident in this production.

OLIVER !	Barnstaple Amateur Operatic Society	Queen's Theatre, Barnstaple
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Director: Alistair Donkin Musical Director: Malcolm Read 15th March 2008

Carol Lee reports:-

One is accustomed to a well-staged and polished production from this director and this year's show was no exception. From the moment the curtain rose on an extremely authentic Dickensian setting, the action flowed admirably and the rather menacing scenes were presented with authenticity. Scenery was superb and the small individual sets brought in with dexterity. This so well known show is not an easy one to produce, but this one had been well planned down to the last detail. Those full chorus numbers, of which sadly there are not many, were beautifully staged, moved and sung. Costumes were very authentic and worn well, and a good atmosphere was created. Principals were all well cast, in particular Fagin and Bill Sykes who backward fall down the steps on his demise was very well executed, bringing gasps from the audience. Nancy, too, endeared herself to the audience – a lovely warm performance and her singing of “As Long As He Needs Me” was very touching. The sixteen-piece orchestra more than enhanced the whole production, providing a most enjoyable sound. This was a very good all round production.

WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION

Torrington Players

Plough Arts Centre, Torrington

Director : Stuart Rickard

May 2008

As with most Agatha Christie plays this one certainly left the audience with a “did he, didn’t he do it” virtually until the very last moment. The story revolves around the young Leonard Vole who has been accused of murder, and the evidence both for and against him being mostly circumstantial.

The Defence and the Prosecution cases were very believable, both parts being played with extreme conviction by Roy Evans and Jim Young. Leonard Vole (Matt Siggs) was played with an apparent innocence, and yet an increasing doubt crept in as the story progressed. Romaine (Rebekah Marshall) played her role with a great deal of authority, and as the loving wife was prepared to lie for her husband whilst under oath, knowing that a wife’s evidence was likely to be unacceptable. The Judge (Ray Ridgwell) was convincing, as was Mr. Mayhew (Barry Neal) but some of the minor roles were not quite up to the same standard, although mention must be made of the Court Stenographer (Joyce Ridgwell) whose timing was impeccable. The sets were good, although the door handle in the office proved a bit of a problem for several of the characters and the change from the Chambers to the Old Bailey was rather long, but was very efficiently executed under the conditions that exist at the Plough. Lighting was good, but costumes varied somewhat in period, and unfortunately the wig and beret worn by Romaine in the penultimate scene reminded me somewhat of a character from ‘ello, ‘ello, thereby causing some amusement and losing some of its impact. It was good to visit a Society where so many members are male (not often seen in Am-Dram). Congratulations to all who took part, both on stage and back stage.

THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK Braunton Productions Queen's Theatre, Barnstaple

Director: Jake Goodenough Choreographer: Val Lambeth M.D. Malcolm Read Chorus Mistress: Liz Ford

Geraldine Branton reports:-

My first visit to this society and what a visit! A spectacular extravaganza of a show had me pinching myself at times to remind me this was an amateur production I was viewing. Amateur in name only and full credit must go to the wonderful cast and production team, who all worked so hard to ensure the success and professionalism of this entertaining musical. Set in New England in the 50’s and adapted from John Updike’s bestseller, three divorcees meet up with the devil incarnate, in the guise of Daryl Van Horne, superbly portrayed by Ian Goodenough. Be careful what you wish for, should have been engraved in their minds, as Daryl seduces each of the three women: Alexandra, the sculptress, Jane the musician and shy Sukie, brilliantly played by Kathryn Burgess, Sophie Parry and Debbie Otani respectively. This quartet set about re-modelling the town of Eastwick, much to the annoyance of local matron and dragon, Felicia Gabriel and her hen-pecked husband, Clyde (Alan Bailey). With the aid of magic, spells and eventually, flying, we were treated to a virtual cauldron of sorcery, which kept us intrigued to the end. Spectacular choreography, especially in the big company numbers, great singing from all principals and chorus, all supported by the fine, ten-piece orchestra, impressive sets, props and effects and the sauciest of costumes certainly made this a show to remember. Thank you Braunton for a memorable evening and full congratulations on the fulfilment of this challenging show. Bravo!

PLAZA SUITE

Actors of North Tawton

Director : Nigel Davies

July 2008

The author of Plaza Suite, Neil Simon is well known for his Jewish style humour, and ANTS production of these three one act plays rose to the challenge of providing the audience with truly believable situations all taking place at different times but with no apparent link to each other, in room 719 of the Plaza Hotel, New York. Each of the acts told the story of love and passion related relationships and the many idiosyncrasies that these two emotions bring out in the human race. The actors are to be congratulated on never once faltering with their dialogue, their timing and their personas. Each character provided us with laughs, cynicism of married life, and at times, pathos. All the actors played their parts with great aplomb and panache, but the

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District 7 – *North Devon* – Diane Gilchrist

interaction between Norma and Roy Hubley in Act III was outstanding. Although space was limited, the set was good, and the lighting likewise. The costumes generally were just right for the period, but the wedding dress worn in Act III was just too modern. Once again, the programme was very novel, and congratulations go to all members of this very talented group for a thoroughly enjoyable evening's entertainment.