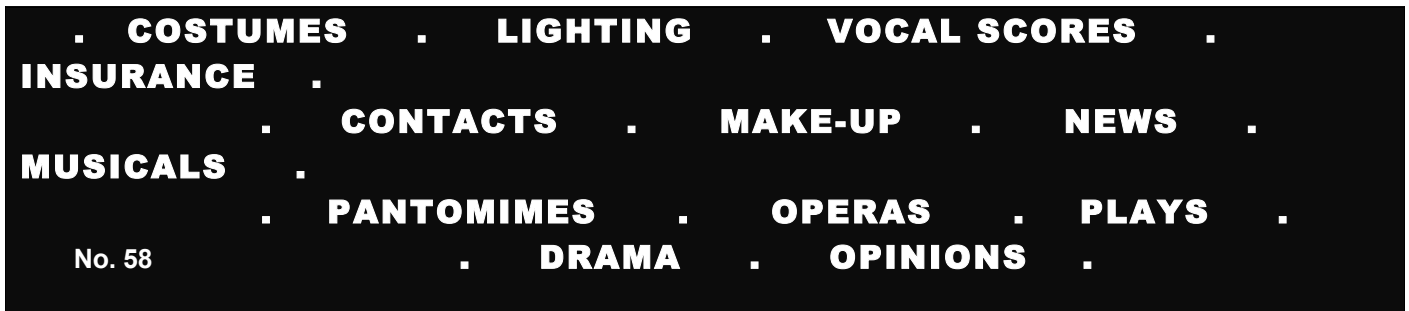


*National Operatic & Dramatic
Association
South West Amateur Theatre
Magazine*

“Lost in the Wilderness”

**district 9
AUTUMN 2008**

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



STUART LYDDON reports on District 9

Dick Whittington	Nailsea Musicals	Sleeping Beauty	Clevedon Comedy Club
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DICK WHITTINGTON Nailsea Musicals The Scotch Corner Centre, Nailsea

Director: Paul Jennings Choreographer: Christine Gilbert & Loanne Ead 24th January 2008

Keeping a lively pace and interest, this ‘Dick Whittington’ had colour and imagination throughout. The ‘London’ medley from the chorus ensured the atmosphere of our capital was felt and one of the ‘Dottiest’ of ‘Bow-Bells’, epitomised the enjoyment of the whole show. The ‘Money sketch’ and the ‘Mop’ routine were nicely worked, keeping the songs short kept that sparkle and directed elements creating a family show. I did laugh at the ‘health and safety’ issue regarding the sweets; a popular mention this year. There is much in the script (by Stephen Duckham), the running gag with Jack ‘feeding of the rabbit’ was handled well, Dick and Alice made an endearing couple, the brokers team of ‘Captain Cod’ & ‘Skate the Mate’ made a suitably daft duo and ‘oh yes’, certainly a hindrance to the evil deeds of King Rat and his ‘ratlings’. Alderman Fitzwarren certainly had a treasure in his store with Sarah Suet, a prize for any occasion. Movement and vocal work from the senior and junior members of the chorus added depth and the choreography of the dancers ‘life’. Good use of lighting and smoke during the sinking of the ‘Saucy Sue’ all helped to stir the creative imagination.

SLEEPING BEAUTY Clevedon Comedy Club Princes Hall

Director: Val Vella Choreographers: Shelley-Anne Douglas & Janice Mitchell Musical Director: Gaynor Burgess 26th January 2008

This ‘Sleeping Beauty’ held a bright start with whizzy balloons and three very different fairies entertaining right from the opening moments. There was a nice busy feel in the direction keeping the continuity with each scene having a real positive motion. The set construction held much colour with differing levels adding interest and focal points throughout. It was pleasing to see a healthy mixture of junior and senior members of the cast enjoying what is a truly British tradition. All songs and routines were entered in with spirit, importantly ensuring that the genre of the show had a variety of skills to embrace. The Wardrobe team successfully endeavoured royal colours in the costumes and more besides, with final touches completed by a busy make-up team. Lighting design, sound and stage management all played an important role keeping everyone busy and on their toes. Props as ever added to it all rounding off a dedicated production team. This presentation held pantomime facets in both a positive direction and musical sense. The walk-downs had the happy fulfilled aspect required by the audience with smiling faces all around and a dance troupe jiggling away on the rostrum, just what the winter season ordered.

TAUNTON OPERATIC - A COMPANY WITH A GRAND VISION

In the early 1990's I had my first encounter with the musical "*Grand Hotel*". The West End was full of home grown musicals, and when news hit the theatre jungle drums that a new show was heading this way across the pond the West End was a buzz. Having worked in two big American musicals I was keen to be seen for this big Tony Award winning show. The American approach to the whole concept of the musical genre is completely different from ours. It's much more intense, more fast passed and well, bigger. I contacted my agent and I was then sent for the first of my auditions. I say first as I subsequently had seven ! When I say auditions I should mean endurance tests. I would spend hours kicking my legs, singing top a's and standing in the old style cattle call line ups. After several weeks the finale recall came and guess what - as a 6ft 2 inch tall actor I was told that I was too short for the show! A few weeks later the show was postponed until the following year. Rumour had it that the American producers wanted a bigger theatre, so when the Dominion became available "*Grand Hotel*" was back on! I was called back in: this time for the part of Eric but no luck (too old this time!) Well I can't do a lot about that, can I ? The show opened in 1992 and as I had several friends in the production I decided to go and see it (determined to hate it). As the curtain fell I sat frozen with tears in my eyes. I had just witnessed one of the most innovative, intelligent musical experiences of my theatrical life. Not since "*Les Misérables*" opened had I felt like that. What a show! A fast moving slick sophisticated musical. How jealous I was. If only I had eaten my greens as a child.

Fast forward sixteen years and I received a phone call from Taunton Operatic asking me to direct a relatively unknown and rarely performed show called "*Grand Hotel*". I could hardly believe my ears. "Yes, oh yes!! When do we start ?"

I take my hat off to Taunton Operatic for choosing this great show and for having the courage and vision to perform this classic Broadway musical. Come along and see "*Grand Hotel*", we might persuade your society to perform this Broadway masterpiece.

SCOTT ST. MARTYN
DIRECTOR/CHOREOGRAPHER

ROBINSON CRUSOE Wayfarers Pantomime Society Brewhouse Theatre, Taunton

Director: Brian Saunders Choreographer: Sheila Driver Musical Director: Jack Leeming January 2008

Janet Elworthy reports:-

Those with a fondness for traditional pantomime would have loved this production. Full of fun, bright and colourful with just about every pantomime associated effect jumping in at every opportunity. Opening scenes introduced superb visual pictures of Robinson, draped over rocks behind gauze, closely followed by lively, polished dance sequences. The level of quality was firmly in place. Experienced cast delivered the good using lots of audience participation, although it was worrying to see one audience member having their ears rubbed until they almost smoked. All appeared to be taken in good heart though. While impact was not always apparent with cast's first foot on stage, most managed to appear extremely comfortable with their characters. Quality of singing suffered on occasion in favour of movement, particularly noticeable in "The Rhythm of Life" (not an easy song at the best of times). Solos fared better with an emotive "out Here on My Own" from Robinson Crusoe. A fantasy half-Monty proved eye opening, with an abundance of writhing bodies and fetching string vests (maybe not so traditional). How could a panto finish without a spectacular finale ? The one went out in glory amidst glitz and glitter. How could anything less be expected from a production with quality written all over it ?

ROBINSON CRUSOE Burnham District Pantomime Society Princess Hall, Burnham

Producers: Val Holmes & Paul Wynn Choreographer: Byrony Holliman Musical Director: Colin Frechter

7th February 2008

The bright and breezy opening chorus number with smiling townsfolk and the seafaring influence, the evening was set for fun and captivation, a thriving directional theme throughout. Each scene contained a positive drive

with all characters enjoying their turn on the stage. With many topical and local references the script kept the spirit of the community well on course for this particular journey with the Saucy Sal. The stage area itself was well used and animated, the sound & lighting was wholesome and added all those important bit and pieces. Stage management kept scenery changes simple and a wardrobe department deserving a lot of credit for the costumes designs. Props sourced many articles, the choreography utilised the abilities of all team members and it was good to see ‘The Pantomime Dancers’ really enjoying their moments on stage. The ‘Junior Chorus’ performed admirably and it was pleasing to see a ‘Girl’ Friday (Bryony Holliman) dancing her way to our hearts. In general all the singing had projection, the chorus in fine form. A most enjoyable presentation of ‘Robinson Crusoe’ delivered with pace in dialogue and fun from all those on-board. A panto to savour with white and gold finale costumes completing a treasured voyage for all.

PATIENCE	Clevedon Gilbert & Sullivan Society	Princes Hall
<i>Producer: Gill Rummings Choreographer: Beverley Chapmane Musical Director: Carol Kenway 15th February</i>		

The atmosphere was engineered to match the occasion with all sorts of props indicating the romantic theme. A healthy rapport between all cast members with continuing pieces of business and reactions cemented the chorus and principle roles. The Dragoons, displayed plenty of character in their pursuit of the maidens and they themselves were all engaging creatures, even though their loyalty was quickly switched from Reginald to Archibald. The costumes had a colourful uniformity, the maidens in differing shimmering dresses with crossed sashes against the red breasted Dragoons. The whole visual appearance was completed by subtle makeup and matching hairstyles, finished off with a surprise package of ‘business suits’ for a conclusion. The set design, with its split levels added much interest and allowed for movement for all concerned. Lighting design captured the mood of love ensuring that nothing was missed. All this was complimented by a balanced sound system which held the correct quality of level during all scenes. Musical direction found empathy and appreciation in the chorus and principle songs with the choreography giving justice to each routine and ability. A presentation full of ‘life’ and ‘fun’, balanced in many ways in an engaging script, directed with an enterprising interpretation.

ALADDIN	Coastliners	Village Hall, Brea
<i>Director: Sally Weston Choreographer: Nigel Hartr Musical Director: Paul Beechey 18th February 2008</i>		

In true Aladdin fashion, this John Morley script introduced Abanaza and the ‘Spirit of the Ring’, to set the scene giving the audience their first chance to boo and hiss the evil thoughts and deeds. With this successfully done everyone was then treated to some ‘Kung-fu Fighting’ as the opening number to this adventure. There was plenty of panto spirit to entertain the audience with local references and name dropping such as Mike Jagger and Simon Cowel. With jokes and tricks, a full range of knockabout banter was on this particular carpet ride. Understanding, interpreting and fun were a wholesome factor throughout the evening with dialogue delivered at a welcoming rate with interaction and energy displayed by chorus members and principles. There was certainly a lot of colour in the costumes, pinks, purples and a variety of other appropriate selections (Rod Stewart leopard leggings) from the wardrobe department. The make-up team had a busy time with the necessity for inventiveness for the Chinese look including a glistening Genie of the Lamp. This presentation was bright and full of zest, just the sort of formula to ensure that all involved; cast, crew and audience alike went home happy and fulfilled.

ANNIE WARBUCKS	Clevedon Light Opera Club	Princes Hall
<i>Producer: Jeff Prescott Choreographer: Julie Ashton Musical Director: Dawn Osborn 12th March 2008</i>		

A welcoming busy start as one would expect from everyone, including the two sets of maids ensuring all was prepared for the festivities. All performances held positive energy in engaging the audience with the storyline and good use of the stage area in each scene. Direction ensured that nothing was missed and focus was maintained at all times. Set construction displayed interesting features and shapes with inventive minds from the set designers providing the right results. Lighting created extra elements to the scenes and the wardrobe

department completed an all round picture with style and colour. All actors fulfilled and played their part with characterisations in control. Elizabeth Bradley as Annie brought a warm feeling to the character and choreography was busy and fun, with cartwheels, swung bodies and spins from energetic participants. Voices were all in fine form with harmonies and solo singing hitting the spot. Dialogue held sway with the action at a pace in keeping with the plot, coordinated by a director and musical director in tandem throughout. Movement around the stage was constructive, props enhanced the period, all finished off by a memorable and freeze framed wedding ceremony. A healthy and worthy presentation of ‘Annie’ part deux.

ROCKASOCKA Nailsea Musicals Junior Section The Scotch Horn Centre, Nailsea

Director: Simon Webb Choreographers: Christine Gilbert & Paul Jennings Musical Director: Paul Jennings

14th March 2008

I was very encouraged to see that the concept of ‘theatre in the round’ was undertaken by this society. I believe it’s an invaluable experience that needs to be embarked upon by technical and acting teams irrespective of age or ability. Obviously and importantly the flavour of the soccer scenes never disappeared as the trials and tribulations of City F.C. were performed before the ‘home-supporters’. There was a nice lot of energy and enthusiasm from all cast members starting with the clapping and chanting, getting everyone in the mood. The pace of dialogue was at a good rate with facial reactions to differing situations and other physical interactions, all happening at appropriate moments. There was an abundance of characterisation and all deserve of mention but unfortunately is not practical in this summary. The hard working costume team certainly did everyone credit not only in acquiring the all important football associated strips from around the world, but also dressing everyone from ‘angels’ to ‘challadies’ and a white rabbit to the Queen, complete with corgi. A lovely enterprising approach, with make-up and props to match. All teams ‘scored’ with this adventure in technical, choreographic and directional sense and an English team winning with a penalty, it can only happen in theatre-land!

SUDDENLY AT HOME Taunton Thespians The Brewhouse Theatre, Taunton

Director: Mike Linham

15th March 2008

Set design and construction importantly featured the required aspects, with the grey and mushroom colours realistically creating a step back in time. Props, including artistic pictures, ornaments and strategically placed plants, busied the stage area giving the impression of a comfortable living life-style. The cast displayed a good understanding of the script with a healthy pace in dialogue. Reactions to each circumstance and situation were well absorbed by the audience who kept with the action, enjoying the language and the thrill of the events that were unravelling before their eyes. Costumes and hairstyles aided the strong and physical characterisation that all possessed. Entrances and exits were effectively managed ensuring that continuity and speed of storyline never wondered from its true course. The box set was substantively built, and décor in keeping with the status of its setting. The lighting complimented the set and the purposeful effects, built the tension as the play progressed. The audience were certainly absorbed in the production (quite rightly so), even following one or two of the red-herrings laid before them. One or two gasps at the end proved that cast, crew and director had fulfilled their task in producing a worthy nights entertainment.

THE SECRET GARDEN Weston-super-Mare Operatic Society The Playhouse

Designed & Directed by Brian Buttle Choreographer: Carol Applegate Musical Director: Matthew Tilke

26th April 2008

The opening prologue and dream sequence with ballerina, dolls house, dialogue and singing during a beautifully composed and performed overture, eased the audience to a captivating beginning. The cast had to have a clear understanding of each character and the balance of personnel was admirable with captivating performances, highlighted during ‘Quartet’, a moment to savour, enchanting and personal. Movement around the stage by all participants was choreographed with stylist intent and took into account influences of cultures. The production itself held a vision of pictures and colours with quick action in pace through each scene. Technical challenges ensured that stage management had constant work and praise must fall on the crew with

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