

*National Operatic & Dramatic
Association*

South West Amateur Theatre Magazine

"A First-rate Opportunity"

AUTUMN 2009

ALEC RUDDICK reports on District 10 (Wiltshire / Bath)

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HOT MIKADO, Zenith Youth Theatre Company, Kingswood Theatre, February

Director: Scott Rogers Musical Director: Roy Page Choreographers: Delie Lee & Julie Dallimore

This musical comedy based on Gilbert & Sullivan's "*The Mikado*" was adapted by David H. Bell (book & lyrics) and Rob Bowman (orchestrations & arrangements). This production was entertainment at its very best. Everything about the staging of this show was incredible – costumes, make-up, hairstyles, lighting and performances – fantastic. The six members of the band played most proficiently and the singing was at the usual high standard always achieved. All the cast gave extraordinary performances and I congratulate everyone who had anything to do with this wonderful production.

THE SORCERER, Swindon Gilbert & Sullivan Society, Wyvern Theatre, March

Director: Bob Hills Choreographer: Gemma Thompson Musical Director: Diana Bickley

Although this G&S Operetta is not quite so well known as some of the others it has some delightful music and the usual humorous story line. This production did it more than justice with an attractive set, good singing and splendid characterisations. During the overture it was a clever idea to have the chorus and dancers moving around the stage and setting the mood of the period. The orchestra played well and was nicely balanced. The chorus singing and acting was of a very high standard and there were some very interesting portrayals. All nine principals gave exceptional performance especially Stuart Benjamin as John Wellington Wells, the Sorcerer. Everything was correct for this part. His fluency, stage presence, singing and acting were outstanding. The role could have been written for him. The Director is to be congratulated for getting the best out of this talented society.

ABIGAIL'S PARTY, Albourne Light Entertainment Club, Memorial Hall, March

Director : Malcolm Shuttleworth

This play by Mike Leigh was extremely well cast and very entertaining. The five members of the cast all gave superb performances. Luci Bowers as Beverly moved fluidly about the stage and her dancing was very sexy. A most accomplished performance all round. Richard Osborne made a very good Laurence. His change of mood from friendly to frustrated was most impressive. Bridget Walker was outstanding as Angela. Even the way she sat awkwardly summed up her character. Mark Davies gave another impressive performance as Tony. I do not know how he kept such a straight face when there was so much going on around him- excellent. Jilly Long as Susan, Abigail's Mother also gave a great performance. Her anxiety throughout was very good. This was a brilliant production.

MY FAIR LADY, Devizes Musical Theatre, Dauntsey School, April

Director: Kim Pearce Choreographers: Kim Pearce & Cassandra Buxton Musical Director: Vicky Winchcombe

This ever popular musical by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe has everything. A good strong story line, interesting characters and great music, and this company did it more than justice. The Orchestra played extremely well and was nicely balanced. Lighting and sound were well controlled and the Back Stage Crew worked well to keep the production moving at a good pace. The choreographers devised appropriate dances for the costermongers and cockneys and also the Embassy Ball, all of which were performed well. All the chorus sang and acted well and put a lot of enthusiasm into it. The costumes supplied by *Costume Workshop, Isle of Wight*, were good and the Ascot and Ballroom costumes were magnificent. This show was very well cast. Naomi Ibbetson as Eliza was perfect for this part. Her diction was phenomenal and her singing excellent. All other members of the cast gave superb performances. The Director used her obvious talents and imagination to present a production that was fresh and highly entertaining.

CAROUSEL, Trowbridge Amateur Operatic Society, The Civic Hall, May

Director : Kirsty Moore Musical Director : Helen Heaton

This production of the musical by Rodgers & Hammerstein was taking some risks in as much as it relied on one basic set of scenery, and it worked. This clever idea resulted in the story line running smoothly throughout the production with just a few pieces of furnishings and props added during blackouts. The eighteen piece orchestra was always tuneful and kept well under control. Once again the male and female chorus singing was excellent with good harmonies. All the cast gave good performances. Gary Robson as Billy Bigelow was very impressive and his soliloquy was very well sustained. Mari Webster and Donna-Kate Wilson were delightful as Julie Jordan and Nettie Fowler. As ever, Teresa Bray sang beautifully as Carrie Pipperidge and gave an excellent performance with partner Craig Fisher giving a delightful portrayal as Enoch Snow. The Snow children were all charming. I was very impressed with Neal Lemay-Lamb as Jigger Craigin. This characterisation was just right. This production was ambitious, delightful and well received.

THE DAY AFTER THE FAIR, The Alderbury Players, Village Hall, May

Director : Steve White

Anna, a servant girl who has been somewhat befriended by her mistress meets an attractive stranger, Charles, at the annual fair. Anna cannot read or write and persuades her mistress to carry on a

correspondence with him on her behalf with unexpected results. This play by Frank Harvey has a cast of four women and two men. The action takes place in the front room of the Harnham's town house in Salisbury. The cast all did amazingly well with finely defined characters. This clever play has a sprinkling of humour in it which did not distract from the intensity of the story line. The set was well constructed and the costumes very good. I congratulate the cast on their extremely good performances.

COPACABANA, Wootton Bassett Light Operatic Society, Memorial Hall, April

Director: Linda Worth Musical Director: Choe Keen

Choreographers: Linda Worth, Kim Pethybridge, Marion Aspell, Kayleigh Stanley & Carol Jeffcutt

To take on this Barry Manilow musical on such a small stage was very ambitious, but it proved in fact to be a good presentation. With lots of fabulous costumes and quick changes the story ran quite smoothly. The small Band was well controlled and the many different types of dances were all executed well. The large cast all did well and there were some outstanding performances. Mark Harper was at home and his very best as Stephen and Tony Forte. Kayleigh Stanley rose to the challenging part of Samantha and Lola La Mar extremely well. Her singing, dancing and acting were all very commendable. Alan Fisher gave us another fine characterization as Sam Silver as did Marion Aspell as Gladys Murphy. Stuart Dark was most impressive as Rico Castelli. He made this character really menacing and his accent was just right. What a lovely performance from Carol Jeffcutt as Conchita. She looked fantastic and her dancing was great. I was also impressed with Nathaniel Colquohoun-Butler as Willy and Carlos, having advanced from the WBLETS to the main Society. The Director has given us another fine production.

OLIVER!, Bath Operatic & Dramatic Society, Theatre Royal

Director/Choreographer : Alan Spencer

Musical Director : Peter Blackwood

This presentation of Lionel Bart's musical was Amateur Theatre at its very best. The Stage Crew worked well to keep the story line moving smoothly and the sound was perfect. Lighting was very well controlled and the silhouette effect of Fagin's last exit was extraordinary. The MD controlled the Orchestra extremely well, especially when under dialogue. Chorus singing was of a very high standard and they also reacted well to all the different scenes. Fagin's Gang and the Workhouse Boys were amazing. They were not only very appealing but their singing and diction was extraordinary and the dancing was fabulous. The very strong cast was well chosen and all performed most professionally. Rob Dallimore was a great Fagin and his obvious rapport with his Gang was almost endearing. Tony Browne as Bill Sykes established his character well with his powerful "My Name" and maintained it throughout. What a fantastic performance from Grace Miller as Nancy. Everything was so impressive. Oliver Harper was excellent as the Artful Dodger and Edward Gabe was a perfect Oliver. I have heard "Where is Love" so many times but have never been so moved as when Edward sang it. Alan Spencer has done it again. With fantastic dances and great direction, this was a production I am so glad I did not miss.

IOLANTHE, Bath Gilbert & Sullivan Society, Wroughton Theatre, May

Director : Derek Dymond Choreographer : Delia Lee Musical Director : Kerry Bishop

This production must rank as one of the best this Society has staged during my twelve years as NODA Regional Representative. As ever, the chorus singing was of the highest standard with good well balanced harmonies. The fairies seemed to be enjoying themselves and the Dukes, Marquises, Earls, Viscounts and Barons were outstanding. Their first entrance with fishing tackle and guns was most memorable, with "Loudly let the Trumpet Bray". The Orchestra played beautifully, always well balanced and controlled. It was a joy to listen to them. All the Cast gave great performances. The

introduction of a Well-known House of Commons Speaker portrayed well by Barbara Goldsack was a clever idea. To cast June Dymond as Queen of the Fairies was a stroke of genius. This proved to be a great performance, well sung and most professional in all ways. The choreographer gave us enough dancing and movement to keep the production fresh and alive. This was a most colourful and delightful production and the Director should be well pleased with this huge success.

MACK & MABEL Frome Amateur Operatic Society Memorial Theatre, May
Director : Phil Courage Choreographer : Susi Tenty Musical Director : Kerry Bishop

This musical with music and lyrics by Jerry Herman is not often presented by amateur societies but this director did a great job in overcoming all the technical difficulties and presented a first class production. The story, set in the Silent Movies era, produced a number of challenges for the technical team who produced some amazing effects with the cast for the silent movies. The orchestra played well but at times were rather too loud for some of the chorus numbers. The lighting was very professional and well controlled but at times the sound was not at its best. The choreographer kept the dancers on their toes especially in "Tap Your Troubles Away" in which Joanne Plenty as Lottie Ames was terrific. Andrew Carpenter carried the part of Mack Sennett extremely well and Heather Jones was sensational as Mable Normand. Her singing was of a particularly high standard. All the cast and company gave very commendable performances and deserve the highest praise.

LES MISÉRABLES (School Edition), Merriman Theatre Group, Norton Hill School, July
Director/Musical Director: Graeme Savage

This was a most ambitious musical to present, yet it was very successful. The Band played well throughout and there were some outstanding performances. Costumes were very good and the sound and lighting were well controlled, especially in the barricade scene which was most impressive. As stated in the programme "to double-cast some of the principal characters has given more opportunities for the group members to shine." The sixteen members of the cast all did extremely well but special mention must be made of some. Harry Shellard-Young as Marius sang well and looked right for this part. Benj Thomas as Inspector Javart is a very difficult part yet performed extremely well. His manner was always correct and his Suicide Soliloquy was most impressive. Fran Horler and Jess Gay both played and sang Fantine very well and Melissa Farebrother was just right as Little Cosette. Rachael Thomas and Zoe Dowler played Cosette with great feeling for the part and sang beautifully and Meg Solomon and Stef Patrick as Eponine both sang the well known "On My Own" superbly. All the chorus did very well and were well disciplined. Josh Howell produced a fantastic performance as Jean Valjean. For a person so young to give such an impressive performance was amazing. I enjoyed and appreciated this characterization very much throughout and his singing of "Bring Him Home" was phenomenal. Graeme Savage must have worked extremely hard to get this standard of performance from such a young group and I congratulate him and them most sincerely.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST, Broad Hinton Amateur Dramatic Society,
Village Hall, July**
Director : Jane O'Neill

This popular play by Oscar Wilde was extremely well presented. The nine members of the cast all made the most of the characters and gave delightful interpretations of their part. The standard of acting here is always very high and this was no exception. The three sets were well constructed and props and furnishings were in keeping with the period. I am so pleased that BHADS now have the fine new village

hall which it deserves.

CHESS, Zenith Youth Theatre Company, Kingswood Theatre, July

Director: Scott Rogers Choreographer: Delia Lee & Julie Dallimore Musical Director: Roy Page

This youth theatre has presented a musical that was brilliant in every respect. This must be one of the most difficult musical scores for band and singers to accomplish, but under this MD they did so superbly. The “Merano” and “One Night in Bangkok” were well choreographed and all the chorus, as usual, were very well disciplined and full of enthusiasm. The overall concept of this amazing production was in the capable hands of Director, Scott Rogers. His inventive ideas resulted in a production that was most memorable for all the right reasons. The chorus and principal singing was exceptional and all the cast gave remarkable performances. Tom Corbishley was quite amazing as Anatoly. His manner was correct throughout and his singing of “Anthem” at the end of Act One and “You & I Reprise” at the finale was perfection. Daisy Jorgenson as Florence Vassey also gave a fantastic performance and sang beautifully. Tim Cooper did exceptionally well as Frederick Trumper and Joel White played Molokov with a maturity that was staggering. Paul Toulson, Sophie Smith and Laura Doble as the Arbiters added another professional touch to this production with their slow ethereal movements and fine singing. I will never forget this amazing production. I cannot congratulate them all enough.

THE ELIXIR OF LOVE, Winterbourne Opera, The Barn at the Grange, July

Director : Ben Occhipinti Musical Director : David Davies

This opera by Donizetti was very well presented. The chorus of farm workers sang extremely well and were all individual characters. The five members of the cast each sang beautifully and their characterizations were very well defined. Harriet Sparrow as Giannetta had a sweet clear voice and looked attractive. Christina Petrou as Adina was delightfully flirtatious with Belcore but finally admits her love for Nemorino. This was well portrayed and her singing was excellent. Gareth Huw John was outstanding as Nemorino. His singing was superb and his acting was most impressive. Tom Kennedy was a fine figure as Belcore. His comedy timing was perfect and his singing faultless. William Tyson Smith as Dr. Dulcamara brought his own touch of magic to this opera. His energetic movements were hilarious as were his facial expressions. His entrance in an old car brought lots of laughter. This was a brilliant idea by the Director who once again presented a great production. Overall this was another wonderful evening of great music, singing and laughter.

CALAMITY JANE, Fome A.O.S. (Spellbound), Memorial Theatre, From, August

Director : Rosie Nicholson Choreographer : Emma Hill Musical Director : Kerry Bishop

This is a difficult show for young people to portray well with adult brashness and emotion at its core, but overall, Spellbound did extremely well. The Golden Garter Band was very well balanced and sympathetically controlled. The wardrobe team must have been very busy with so many different costumes to handle from cowboys and western to uniforms and evening dress, all fitting beautifully for all ages. Although many of the girls had to take some of the male parts the make-up team worked its magic and it was difficult to distinguish one from another. The dancing was at its best with a good variety of ballroom, western, tap and can-can, all executed very well. All the cast did very well with some fine interpretation of the parts. Dora Bishop as Calamity worked extremely hard and had a strong presence on stage. Charlotte Mole made an excellent Katie Brown and Lucy Howlett and Joe Nicholson made a good partnership as Susan and Francis Fryer. I was also very impressed with Ellis Dackombe as Henry Miller. His sense of timing was very good and he got the most out of the comedy in this part. For

me the overall stars of this production were the chorus and dancers. From the youngest to the oldest all worked so well and were really "with it" throughout. Their enthusiasm was infectious. The Director has once again presented a first class musical full of imagination, colour and fun.

Youth Academy 2010, 6th - 9th April

If you are aged between 12 and 17 and you love theatre, this is the Academy for you.

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For full details of NODA Youth Academy 2010 please visit www.noda.org.uk or [contact Membership Services](#) on 01733 865 790.

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July 2010

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venue & date to be announced shortly

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*Contact our membership secretary: nicklawrence@hotmail.com
to register your web-site & email addresses*

YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2010 WILL BE DUE ON JANUARY 1st

Invoices will be sent in December.

Please pass to your Treasurer for immediate attention and save your volunteer Regional Representative a lot of extra work.