

*National Operatic & Dramatic
Association*

South West Amateur Theatre Magazine

"A First-rate Opportunity"

AUTUMN 2009

BRIAN OLIVER reports on District 12 (E.Dorset)

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**PLAY IT AGAIN CASABLANCA, Zenith Theatre Company,
St. Aldheims Church Hall, 13th March**
Written & Directed: Ann Whitaker

Created by the very talented Ann Whitaker, a musical adaptation of the classic film “Casablanca”. I think that Ann and the members of Zenith will hold their hands up and say this was not one of their better shows. In places the comedy was brilliant with several very funny scenes. But sadly in other scenes it was slow and embarrassing and did it seem that the same person sang every musical number for much of the show. Unfortunately on the night the show was plagued with technical problems. We were plunged into blackouts several times due to fuses tripping, and the microphones and sound system seem to have a life of their own. You can’t operate the sound and lighting desk on stage and be a member of the cast at the same time. The set as always was impressive for such a small venue and the costumes looked superb. However I must say I really enjoyed the show overall, and found myself wondering if Ann would let me use her script at a later date at a larger and better venue.

LOVE BEGINS AT FIFTY, KCA Players, Kinson Community Centre, 27th March
Director: Carol Willison

Once again KCA excelled with this very funny play. A married man, approaching his fiftieth birthday, decides he want a last fling before he get too old and responds to several lonely-hearts advertisements. At the same time his wife has entered them into a competition looking for the perfect married couple. We were treated once again to some wonderful performances from a very fine cast who brought out the best from this fine comedy.

MOVIE MANIA, BOS Musical Company (Ensemble), Kinson Community Centre, 24th April
Director: Claire Camble-Hutchins

This is the first time that I have been able to see a production by BOS Ensemble, but from reports I have received from their earlier productions I knew I was in for a treat. I was not to be disappointed by the

twelve very talented performers, several of whom were still teenagers and look set to be stars of the future. It was very ambitious with familiar favourites intermingle with less well-known numbers. The singing was excellent. The choreography was superb and it had just the right amount of comedy and light heartedness to make it sparkle throughout.

OKLAHOMA!, Bournemouth & Boscombe Light Opera Company, The Pavilion Theatre, Bournemouth, 29th April

After not putting on a major production in 2008 BBLOC returned to The Pavilion with this sure fire winner. This was an absolutely superb production. The show was virtually faultless, apart from a missed entrance by a leading character (who's overall performance later more than made up for the error). It had excellent principal characters, all of whom were fine singers, and they were supported by a top class, well drilled, chorus. Their dancing was excellent and was full of life and enthusiasm I am sure that this was probably the first time I have seen a production by this company that was not spoilt by poor sound control and for a change the excellent orchestra did not over power the cast.

OLIVER!, P & P Productions, Lighthouse Theatre, Poole, 22nd May
Director: Sonia Gilson

P & P celebrated their 90th year with wonderful production and with all the recent television exposure from the present West End production it was no surprise therefore to see a very near "Full House" which created a wonderful atmosphere in the theatre. The set was very impressive throughout; although it did look a little unstable at times and seemed awkward to work around. Several times I was concerned for the safety of the cast during the musical numbers. The children were enthusiastic and well drilled throughout but at times the singing was lost due to the orchestra overpowering them. Such a shame. There were excellent performances from the all the leading roles, but it was Clairelouise Orchard as Nancy who was class above the rest. Her rendition of "As long as He Needs Me" was a magnificent.

WALZES FROM VIENNA, West Moor Singers, Barrington Theatre, Ferndown, 29th May
Director: Sue Oldrey

West Moor Singers celebrated their 40th Anniversary in fine style with this lovely old musical about Johann Strauss junior. Of course, everyone has probably heard the music before even if the words are unknown. The singers as always were on fine form and it brought back many wonderful memories of my first leading role. I had forgotten how funny the story line was. A special mention must be given to their wonderful accompanist Jean Lugsdon who has been with singers since day one.

HELLO, DOLLY!, Wimborne Musical Society, Tivoli Theatre, 26th June
Director: Roy Joseph

It is a sad fact that many amateur societies are suffering from a lack of men and as a result many good shows are not performed because of this. "Hello, Dolly!" is such a show, and the shortage of male members in this production was certainly noticeable when some chorus numbers had only 3 or 4 men on stage. Although this production did not achieve the standard of last year's "42nd Street", it was nevertheless overall very enjoyable. There was good characterisation and some wonderful comic moments, but in places the singing was a let down. The costumes were excellent, very colourful, and the matching ones for the curtain call looked superb. The band in the pit did a super job as did the marching

band on stage and the sound balance was good throughout. Stars to look out for in the future must be the young men who played Barnaby & Ambrose.

SEEDS OF DOUBT, KCA Players, Kinson Community Centre, 27th June

Director: Steve Watton

At the present KCA Players are maintaining such a high standard with every production that it would be easy just to say “excellent once again” (which it was). In this case, however, the set designer and builders also deserve credit for creating such an excellent set. A superb looking garden and in the last scene the shed looked as if it had been attacked by a sledgehammer. It was nice to see some new faces in the cast.

AN A to Z OF MUSIC, P & P Singers, Layard Theatre, Canford School, 4th July

Director: Jean Chambers

A move to a larger venue, which has excellent acoustics, has certainly made this excellent award winning choir sound better than ever. This was an excellent production with a song to suit every occasion. There were far too many excellent numbers to mention, but the highlight of the night for me was “The Easter Hymn” from “*Cavalleria Rusticana*”. With nine trophies on display from festivals earlier this year, this choir produce a sound that is second to none.

MEN AT ARMS, Zenith Theatre Company, St. Aldheim's Church Hall, 18th July

Director: Ian Roth

I don't profess to be a fan of author Terry Pratchett and I had been told in advance that this was a difficult play to follow and understand. It certainly didn't help that in places the diction was poor and for much of the play faces of the cast members was in semi-darkness because of very poor lighting. It also seemed that the sound cues was very hit and miss. I felt sorry for the cast members who did a superb job under the circumstances. Their characterisations were excellent and there were some wonderful comic moments. The many changes on scene meant that it was very slow at times but, never the less, I did enjoy this play very much. If the director had not been a member of the cast, he would perhaps have been able see some the pitfalls and deal with some of them whilst the play was running.

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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.