

*National Operatic & Dramatic  
Association*

*South West Amateur Theatre Magazine*

**"A First-rate Opportunity"**

**AUTUMN 2009**

## GRAEME SAVAGE reports on District 14 (Bath / N. Somerset)

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### **OKLAHOMA!, The Parish Players, Tockington Parish Hall**

*Director: Linda Evans Choreographer: Jill Harris Musical Director: Chloe Allsopp-Jones*

The programme described this as The Parish Players' most demanding production yet, and the whole company certainly rose to the challenge with great enthusiasm. Andy Black's beautifully detailed set, ingeniously designed with its continually evolving landscape paintings, immediately transported us to the American mid-west. Mike Jones played Curly with an infectious Tigger-ish enthusiasm, leading the company confidently through this epic and demanding show. He was ably supported by Judy Jones as the matronly Aunt Eller and Louisa Luft as Laurey, whose wonderfully operatic voice occasionally sacrificed a little in diction to achieve its lovely tone, but was no less compelling for this. Phil Savage as Will and Linda Chappell as Ado Annie were a slightly older couple than expected, but this added a fun comic edge as we enjoyed the shenanigans of a pair of overgrown kids, clearly old enough to know better! The love triangle was expertly completed by the versatile Andy Black, who relished every comic line as Ali Hakim. Phil Domeille's Jud cast a threatening shadow over the whole production, a remarkable achievement given that he was a last minute replacement in the role. The chorus gave their all in the musical numbers and made the most of their smaller speaking roles. Linda Evans unfussy direction, along with Jill Harris's simple yet effective choreography, brought the best out of the cast, complemented sympathetically by Chloe Jones-Allsop's tight musical direction and small band. The packed-house audience, swaying and singing along with gusto, were given a great evening's entertainment.

### **SEUSSICAL – the Musical, Keynsham Youth Theatre, Broadlands School, April**

*Director: Graeme Savage Choreographers: Natalea Trevor & Sarah Savage Musical Director: Philip Styles*

**Geraldine Branton** reports:-

Visiting Keynsham Youth is always a joy and this was no exception, to see their highly proficient and imaginative portrayal of Dr Seuss's well-loved stories of "*The Cat in The Hat*" and his friends Jojo, Horton the Elephant et al. Energetic choreography, a glorious array of costumes, attractive décor in sets and props, created by the Company were fully complemented by lighting and sound, a terrific-sounding Orchestra and the multi-talented young cast. Reigning supreme, Paul Toulson's Cat had us eating out of his paws as we followed his hilarious antics, leading young Jojo (nicely portrayed by Kieran Squire) through his many travails, before being reunited with his family. Along the way he was helped by kindly elephant Horton (Tim Cooper) and Gertrude McFuzz (Sophie Baxter) and hindered by such diverse characters as Mayzie La Bird and General Gengus Khan. Throughout the performance it was obvious

how much this young troupe has improved, and charmed the audience with their delivery, enthusiasm and utter commitment to their craft. All performances showed a high standard of achievement in song, dance and characterisation, and were strongly supported by parents and production team. Three members of this support team received NODA 10-year badges after the show. Well done!

**DAY OF RECKONING, Bath Unity Players, The Rondo Theatre**

*Director: Philip Tucker*

The preparations for a village fete, and the inevitably disastrous day that it leads to was the setting for Bath Unity Players' annual drama. Despite the possibility for this to become a population of stereotypes, Philip Tucker's direction and a confident cast ensured that the characters remained believable even as their lives and relationships were falling apart. Particularly impressive throughout were Lynda Tucker as the village gossip Ethel, and Jill Kelly as 83-year-old Mavis, both keeping their array of tics and mannerisms consistent. June Player's Gloria and Philip Thorpe's drunken and adulterous vicar both came to life in a surprisingly moving final scene - Gloria's lengthy monologue delivered with restrained passion which could so easily have become melodramatic, and the vicar's reactions never upstaging these delicate moments. Susan Evans as Pauline, the vicar's wife and Kim Cardoza as the lovestruck schoolteacher, did well despite having less rounded characters to work with than the others. This very capable cast was completed with solid performances from Trish Hill and Jenny John as the predatory women, determined to get their prey. The set was simple yet effective, fitting nicely into the Rondo's intimate surroundings, as was the lighting, confidently controlled by debutant lighting technician Sam Kelly. A slightly smaller audience than the company deserved was more a reflection on the wealth of quality amateur productions on offer in Bath, rather than this group's production, and the enthusiastic response offers great encouragement for Unity's future endeavours.

**SONGS FROM THE SHOWS: YOUNG AT HEART, Bath Light Operatic Group,  
The Guildhall, Bath**

*Musical Director: Matthew Finch    Programme compiled by Katie Bradbury & Colin Lindsey*

*Young At Heart* was the subtitle of BLOG's annual Songs from the Shows presentation, as the older company drafted in the talented youth from the local Curtain Up Theatre School to join them in revitalising this slightly tired genre, and it largely worked wonders. As always, the concert showcases members who may be less familiar to regular BLOG audiences, and this evening unearthed a couple of potential stars – Emily Froggatt's beautiful rendition of 'Whistle Down The Wind' and Zoe Maggs leading the company confidently through 'You'll Be In My Heart' revealed two soloists with big futures ahead of them. The enthusiastic company adapted well to the new surroundings, ensuring that the audience at the sides of the stage were always involved in the performance, and making the simple choreography work well on the small stage, without looking too crowded. While Rich Newman's introductions got little response from a very quiet audience, it was however, essential that they were kept informed of the less familiar numbers and shows, a role often overlooked in other companies producing SFTS style cabarets. The lighting was as effective as the limited facilities at Bath's Guildhall allowed, making the most of the decorative interior and resident chandeliers. While not yet the finished article, this was a bold revision of a concert that has become a little jaded in recent years, a confident step forward for which the company and production team should be given credit. With the depth of talent on show in the company, the future of Bath Light Operatic Group certainly looks to be in very safe hands.

**BATH GANG SHOW 2009, Kingswood Theatre, Kingswood School, 29<sup>th</sup> May**

*Director/Musical Director: Adrian Cottle    Choreographer: Kate Tmblin*

'Do our best' may be a slightly historical motto for the Scouts and Guides but it was certainly much in evidence at this year's Gang Show, as 60 young (and some not so young) performers gave every ounce of energy and enthusiasm they had into two hours of good-old fashioned entertainment. Classic gang show sketches were given a modern flavour, and some very impressive multi-media projections and lighting enhanced the mix of modern dance compilations, and the legendary Crest of a Wave. Simply having this many performers on stage presented its own challenges, and credit to the director and choreographer for ensuring that the stage didn't look too cramped, if at times some of the smaller members of the company did get lost towards the back of the stage. In a show such as this, where the emphasis is on participation as much as perfection, the cast is inevitably made up of seasoned campaigners and first-time performers, but it was evident that all were working together, and if occasional first-time nerves and hesitancy crept in to some of the dances and sketches, these were swept away by a very evident 'company ethic'. The pace of the evening moved along nicely, with a well-balanced programme and a very poignant dedication to the Help for Heroes campaign. A slightly over-long Abba medley dragged a little, but as the focus returned to the younger members for the finale, the audience were sent away on a high note. Well done to all involved – far too many to mention with over a hundred names listed, a fantastic advert for the Scouting movement.

**KISS ME, KATE, Keynsham Light Operatic Group, Saltford Hall, Saltford**

*Director: Corinne-Anne Richards    Choreographer: Tracey Dean    Musical Director: Keith Warhurst*

KLOG's celebrated their 40th anniversary with this new version of the Cole Porter classic backstage musical. With its 'play within a play' conceit and lengthy Shakespearean passages, it can be difficult to sustain the humour for the audience, and despite some dips in pace and some static direction, the company achieved this well. Duncan Mitchell as Fred/Petruchio clearly enjoyed the elegant wordplay, ably supported by Joanna Meredith as Lili/Kate, who nailed the character, and her chemistry with her estranged husband provided the evening's high points. In the supporting roles, Andrew Graham as Bill/Lucentio and Jenny Reynolds as Lois/Bianca sang their roles well, but neither were helped by the insistence on performing their songs in their entirety, which became very repetitive. The two gangsters were played with great enthusiasm by Sam Cordy and Dave Haile, making the most of every comic opportunity and Sally Thompson led the company through a lively rendition of "Too Darn Hot". However, the choreography, while well executed by some of the dancers, was just not strong enough to sustain the lengthy dance breaks. The orchestra was well-directed, but at times a little too dominant in the quieter numbers. The costumes, particularly the period costumes were excellent and complemented by the subtle yet effective lighting.

Overall, this was a successful production. However, there are recurring issues in this company's productions, particularly the overly elaborate sets and slow scene changes, which are affecting the pace and direction, and holding back a very enthusiastic and well-supported company from producing the excellent show of which they should be capable.

## **Youth Academy 2010, 6<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> April**

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

Join us at Oakham School, Rutland to build confidence, learn new techniques, develop skills, make friends and most importantly have fun whilst you learn! NODA Youth Academy 2010 will offer two Musical Theatre courses, covering a range of popular West End shows, and one Drama Skills course to equip young actors with all the skills they need for the stage.

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

**Book your place today!**

*July 2010*

## **SOUTH-WEST REGIONAL AGM & AWARD CEREMONY**

**venue & date to be announced shortly**

*Please note the unusual date – moved to accommodate the National Conference.*

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## **SOUTH-WEST REGIONAL WEBSITE**

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Contact our membership secretary: [nicklawrence@hotmail.com](mailto:nicklawrence@hotmail.com)

*to register your web-site & email addresses*

## **YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2010 WILL BE DUE ON JANUARY 1<sup>st</sup>**

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.*