

*National Operatic & Dramatic  
Association*

*South West Amateur Theatre Magazine*

**"A First-rate Opportunity"**

**AUTUMN 2009**

## LYNNE CAYGILL reports on District 5 (Exeter & Area)

<u>Production</u>	<u>Society</u>
The Baker's Wife	Crediton Operatic & Dramatic Society
The Mikado	Centre Stage
Pygmalion	Exmouth Players
Home Front	The Riverside Players
Chess	Exmouth Musical Theatre Company

### **THE BAKER'S WIFE, Crediton Operatic & Dramatic Society, Queen Elizabeth School, April 09**

*Director: Clare Philbrock Musical Director: Dorothy Worthington*

The minute you walked into the building you were transported to a café in a small French village. A charming atmosphere had been very well created by appropriate costumes, furniture and props and a clever stage set. The production was strongly cast and even the smallest roles were extremely well performed. The show is not written for a large chorus, but the director cleverly integrated all the company into the plot with everyone completely part of the story, playing consistent and often amusing characterisations. The audience really felt as if they were part of the lives of these villagers, as their contrasting emotions were so well portrayed. The Baker, the Baker's wife, the café owner and his wife and Monsieur le Marquis were all expertly played and I must give Therese-a spinster a special mention as I found her performance highly amusing. I could mention everyone in the cast as I did not see a weak link. The music in this show is challenging, but both chorus and principals sang it with confidence and feeling, the small band never overpowered them and it was kept under tight control by Dorothy Worthington. I watched the show on the first night and what a performance the company gave and what fabulous team work.

### **THE MIKADO, Centre Stage, Exmouth Pavilion**

*Director: Sue Bonnett Musical Director: Catherine Stabb*

It was a most refreshing change to see this Savoy Opera performed by young people. For once the "train of little ladies" looked, moved and sounded like school girls. This popular operetta had the pace, charm, energy and enthusiasm that young people do so well. It was a very well-balanced cast and all sang with confidence. Highlights of the music were from Pish Tush, "Our great Mikado," Yum Yum, "The Sun Whose Rays" and the trio; "I Am So Proud" which was sung as well as I have ever heard it. The chorus singing was supplemented by a few past members in the wings, which ensured the harmonies were very well balanced. The direction was humorous and imaginative; the cast understood the comedy and the excellent diction from all the principals meant that this was a very entertaining production of The Mikado. The costumes were colourful, and the cast wore the Japanese style well, they looked most attractive against the background of a well-dressed stage. As I sat down to watch this performance at the start of the evening, I overheard a member of the audience say that she came to all productions by Centre Stage and that they had all been most enjoyable, however she was very dubious as to how they were going to tackle a G & S show, she need not have worried, young people can perform these shows as well as anyone and Centre Stage certainly gave us a production we all enjoyed.

**PYGMALION, The Exmouth Players, Blackmore Theatre, Exmouth, June 09**

*Director: Peter Nickols-Rawle*

A convincing Higgins was played by Sam Pike. Although younger than I had come to expect the role to be, his portrayal was confident and assured and it worked well with Eliza who was also very young. She captured the different emotions that Eliza experiences and the change from cockney to lady was very well done. It was quite refreshing to see these two roles played by young people. I would have liked to have seen a more military bearing in the part of Colonel Pickering and a more sedate Mrs. Pearce. Pat Cowey played an excellent Mrs. Higgins. Born to the part, it was a dignified and very confident portrayal. Mrs. Eynsford-Hill and Clara were stylishly played, with Alison Johns bringing that extra something to the part of Clara so the audience actually noticed her and Leigh Steedman played the role of Freddy admirably. I felt Doolittle needed to be a little more amusing. Diction from the whole cast was clear and always audible. On the whole the play had pace, but I felt the final scene with Higgins and Eliza needed to speed up especially at 11.00 ! The set comprised of an imaginative use of stage blocks. The setting of these had been carefully considered, however, this type of stage setting needed practice. The stage crew did not seem very sure as to where the blocks should go and this held up the action in a play that was already long, but we did have some very well chosen music to cover the scene changes. This was a very thoughtful production. It had been well rehearsed and engaged the audience despite the late finish.

**HOME FRONT, The Riverside Players, Village Hall, Newton Poppleford, 5<sup>th</sup> June 09**

*Director: Tricia Barclay*

If there was an award for the most squashed full house this presentation would walk it. The famous “War Time Spirit” was certainly in evidence as we squeezed our way around the long tables in preparation for a truly village entertainment while trying not to step on the toes of the Chairman of the local council. Opening with the exuberant youngsters presenting good old family entertainment with verve and considerable talent, the presentation soon had everyone laughing, encouraging and applauding. I'm not sure how prepared the youngsters were for the full-on audience participation, but they handled it like old pros. After a generous supper, the “oldies” came on with a one act episode from the “Dad's Army” stable. Suffice to say, despite their looks, all the well-known television characterisations were entertainingly reproduced led by John Griswold's hilarious Captain Mainwaring. If the presentation was not word perfect and some scene changes unnecessarily long it matter not a jot. Sergeant Wilson's use of the hobby-horse, Frazer's imaginative accent, Pike's gormlessness and Corporal Jones' panics had the audience in fits of laughter. Tricia paraded most of the EX10's much loved talent to hysterical effect. What a tonic!

**CHESS, Exmouth Musical Theatre Company, The Pavilion Theatre, May 09**

*Director: David Youll Musical Director: Lynne Caygill*

**Iain Douglas** reports:-

I found this production to be one of the best I have seen by this company. It is a difficult choice of production, being essentially an opera, with some very difficult music. It's years since I last saw it, and I had forgotten just how good the music is. David had cut the show considerably, which led to a very fast moving piece which was just over 2 hours long. The downside to that was that some elements of the story were given only a passing “nod” and it was difficult to keep up with what was going on. That's just a minor point though because the quality of the performances and direction was superb. The 6 main principals (Florence, Freddie, Anatoly, Svetlana, Molokov and Arbiter) gave stunning vocal

performances that far exceeded anything else I have seen at Exmouth. The staging was adventurous, using a massive LED screen at the rear of the stage. This was very effective. when it worked. There were some slight problems on the last night. The orchestra, as is to be expected with Auntie Lynne in the driving seat, gave a really good sound and supported the vocals without drowning them. Surely the best show in East Devon this season?

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

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*July 2010*

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**venue & date to be announced shortly**

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

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to register your web-site & email addresses*

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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.*