

*National Operatic & Dramatic
Association*

South West Amateur Theatre Magazine

"A First-rate Opportunity"

AUTUMN 2009

JANET ELWORTHY reports on District 6 (S.Devon)

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**RUMPLESTILTZKIN, Tipton Players and Pantomime Society, Community Hall,
Tipton St. John, February 2009**

Directors: Yvonne Kellett & Stephanie Kinson Musical Director: Kyle Hayes

This is an incredibly busy village group, with a choc-a-bloc yearly programme, who work hard to encourage community participation, particularly within the youth sector. The first night, full house audience enjoyed a production that combined a strong, easily understood story line, with equally strong principal players, who succeeded in portraying larger than life characters, the essence of a successful show. Notable high spots included the opening to act two with it's black and white costumed ball and gorgeous millinery, a visual feast. Smash and Grab as the two stooges, performed a brilliant take on the Blues Brothers which had to be seen to be believed. Musical content was abundant and varied, with unfamiliar numbers (to some of us anyway) included.

Although performed pleasantly, weaker voices were not always able to sustain total audience attention during these songs. Cast performed with energy and enthusiasm, maintaining a lively pace despite the occasional corpsing, due to first night nerves, no doubt. A colourful, enjoyable pantomime, easily on a par with past creditable productions and much appreciated by the local audience.

TIME OF MY LIFE, Sidmouth Amateur Dramatic Society, Manor Pavilion, 19th March 2009

Director: Janet Farrow

I don't like Ayckbourn, but given the Farrow Treatment he can be enjoyable. This evening proved comical enough to make me laugh out loud and realistic enough to win my sympathy. The three couples were intelligently cast & directed; each actor reacting to the other genuinely with no details or moves simply for the sake of it. At the centre, of course, were the eccentric waiters and owner of the restaurant. Played, as written, by one person who, though given the opportunity to star, never destroyed the overall rhythm of the piece. The actors were afforded an atmospheric composite set designed by Ray Pickworth and conceived by SADS regular team. It was effectively lit with a minimum of fuss and dressed appropriately. We've all been to a similar Italian restaurant at some time. Scene changes, so difficult without a revolve, were well planned, timed and carried out. Director Janet brought every bit of her experience to bear on this company and this play. Evenly paced, moved and conceived, it could hardly fail to impress. The proof was in the merging of experienced and inexperienced members into a seamless

blend where to mention one portrayal would demand I mention all. Such was the complete oneness of this production. Directors often waffle on about “ensemble pieces” and rarely is it actually achieved. This production was an example of such a success.

DAZZLE, Tiverton Junior Operatic Club, The New Hall, Tiverton, February 2009
Director: Kev Behan M.B.E. Choreographer: Kathy Macmillian Musical Director: Andrew Curtis

“Razzle, dazzle them” as the song goes, and they certainly did, performing with a freshness and enthusiasm that could not fail to impress. This large group, with ages covering a wide spectrum, continue to go from strength to strength with more than a handful of seriously talented youngsters nestled within their ranks. Best described as a very loose take on an intergalactic, ‘High School Musical’ with a touch of ‘Grease’ thrown in, it’s humour, fun and glamour make this the perfect show for youth groups. Scope for imaginative character development was grabbed by the horns, with senior members showing immense maturity in the roles they portrayed. The Chorus sang with complete confidence and the attitude called for in a couple of numbers, despite some being far from easy and performed barely inches from the audience. Staging and choreography highlighted the discipline and energy we have grown to expect from this group. Set and costumes, all made in-house, were impressive, a great deal of thought and care ensured every cast member looked the part from head to toe, culminating in a production of which all involved can be proud.

JACK AND JILL, Lyme Regis Pantomime Society, Marine Theatre, Lyme Regis, February 2009
Director: Sheila Larcombe Choreographer: Kathy Smith

As the old rhyme goes, “Jack and Jill went up the hill etc...” Well this production certainly didn’t fall down. Costumes were vividly colourful, complementing the cheery opening. The well-known “Hey, hey Baby” had the whole audience swaying in their seats, getting into the groove, so to speak. The cast threw themselves enthusiastically into the actions, creating a jolly atmosphere. Actors projected well, but at times lines were lost because of gabbling. Forgotten lines, including some punch lines, marred the production, hindering the otherwise upbeat pace. Younger members made a lasting impression, singing tunefully with confidence, performing with energy and eagerness. Jack and Jill (Amy Street and Laura Taylor) deserve special mention, their enthusiasm shone through, both particularly adept with the notable choreography. U.V. lights added an extra sparkle to the scintillating ‘Spirit in the Sky’ number, a quick fix of nostalgia for ‘70’s’ guy’s and chicks. It was encouraging to see a huge improvement in the amount of movement and vivacity contained within the show, compared to previous years. Working with a new director has obviously added a fresh, welcome new dimension to the production. This was an entertaining pantomime, much enjoyed by the receptive audience.

**THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE, Sidmouth Arts Club Operatic Society,
Manor Pavilion, April 2009**

Director: Joan Heard Choreographer: Vicky Salter Musical Director: John Amery

This is a show that succeeds sumptuously or fails abysmally on the back of its cast. Sumptuously gets it; give me more please. This story is of a small town girl moving to New York with a huge bag of ambition, learning about love, modern life and its pitfalls, one of which on this occasion is white slavery. It offers the perfect open door for fabulous dance routines which the very talented Vicky Salter demonstrated with inspirational sequences, performed with heaps of vivacity and competence, particularly the phenomenal “Speed Test” number and “Forget About the Boy”. Across the board, cast firmly became one with their character, acting with magnetism and a 'likeability factor', drawing the

audience into the production. Accompanied by a precise, strong (a little too strong at times) band, cast sold their vocal numbers with style and confidence. Donna Heard (Muzzy Van Hossmeare) sure knew how to deliver with her sassy rendition of 'Only In New York' as did Rebecca Green (Millie) whose performance of 'Gimmie Gimmie' was show stopping. Humour featured strongly with Marc Colson (Chin Ho) and Selwyn Kussman (Bun Foo) responsible for some of the funniest moments. A complete sell-out assured me I was not alone raving about this show.

PIRATES OF PENANCE, Lyme Regis Operatic Society, Marine Theatre, May 2009

Music & Staging: Nick Lawrence

"*The Pirates of Penzance*" is one of the G & S favourites along with "Mikado" and "H.M.S. Pinafore" so is performed with regularity around the region. As appears to be usual, there was a shortage of male pirates and policeman, but at least the charming daughters of this production managed to look younger than their father, a splendid major-general played with fortitude, in a suitably bombastic manner. The simplistic set, designed and constructed within the society provided more than a pleasant back drop to the ensuing daft shenanigans, products of W.S. Gilbert's quick-witted mind. Humour and timing particularly stood out in the inventively staged scenes. Chorus numbers varied in confidence with "Hail Poetry" scooping the honours, all parts defined and balanced. Standing solidly at the centre of this production was a pitch perfect, earnest Frederic, partnered by a charming, accomplished Mabel, both carrying every word with expertise, spoken or sung. While this first night performance undoubtedly lacked a certain amount of titillating reaction from the ladies and a handful of swashless buckle from the men, no doubt the ensuing run would bring the confidence needed to overcome the nerves. No matter, this production looked like an entertaining pirate musical, sounded like an entertaining pirate musical, and was an entertaining pirate musical.

OLIVER!, Axminster Drama Club, The Guildhall, Axminster, July 2009

Director: Caroline Markham Choreographer: Sara Leat Musical Director: Rob Preece

From the opening chords, stage and cast immediately and solidly plunged the audience into Dickenson London, with an honest rather than inventive directorial approach. An excellent orchestral accompaniment gave solid support although young voices were masked at times. The plot calls for larger than life characters, while not all cast achieved this, each actor brought his or her own characterisation to the role. In the majority of productions Fagin is portrayed very closely to the film version, Chris Lane played a more original version of the role, which was enjoyable and very much his own interpretation. Oliver performed with charm, singing with an innocent, naturally sweet voice while a cheeky female Artful Dodger appeared totally accepted by the audience. Chorus pulled out all the stops performing 'Who Will Buy', with all parts sung with accuracy and clearly heard, it looked and sounded beautiful. Overall the production needed more grit, dirt and depravity to seal its total success, but this was a team effort and the enjoyment of those onstage proved infectious. Who could ask for more?

CELEBRATION, Sidmouth Amateur Dramatic Society, Manor Pavilion, July 2009

Director: Ray Pickworth

An interesting comedy set 'up-north', presented, almost, as two mini plays. Several family members make preparation for a wedding, then six months later, a funeral of their uncle who provides the link. The quintessential '1960's family were 'busied' in a choreographic way to prepare a venue for the forthcoming nuptials while delivering the wordy dialogue with it's bright sparks of comedy which was well received by the large, vocal audience. All the characters were clearly determined with relationships

established well, bantering with a pace which found the characters cutting in with a little more enthusiasm than was needed on occasion, but nevertheless sustained interest at all times. Accents, although variable, were more than acceptable along with a convincing set, props, costume and subtle lighting, which firmly created a realistic ambience that could not fail to evoke memories for a large proportion of the audience, of their own family events of that era. The second act appeared livelier, no doubt due to cast confidence increasing as this first night performance progressed. The director must take credit for creating a well rounded production in which all elements gelled together with such agreeable, deceptive ease.

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF, Lyme Regis Community Players, Marine Theatre, July 2009

Director: Rose Wigmore. Musical Director: Nick Lawrence

"*Fiddler*" is a story of hope and love breaking the bonds of tradition within the folds of the Jewish Community at the start of Russia's revolutionary period. The director, with her experience and vision produced a creditable production as her swan song with this society. So often the beautiful Jerry Brock music is not fully appreciated, due to the need to fervently choreograph any note sung on stage to avoid the 'static situation'. On this occasion, the chorus used 'stillness' to ensure audience enjoyment of the moment, sensitively supported by a rich, full band who complimented every note, including some lovely duet work. Taking a while to get into their stride, principals played convincing characters, with Tevye (Nick Bussian) bringing a real warmth to his character, partnered by a slightly serious Golde (Jane Caddy) who delivered her lines with as much caustic, dry wit as was needed. The animosity between the Russians and the Jews needed clearer exposure to have ensured the wedding rumpus made more of an impression on the audience, as did the leaving of Anatevka, it's brevity leaving little time for the emotion of the scene to hit home. However, that being said, this production presented itself with charm and was well worth seeing.

Youth Academy 2010, 6th - 9th April

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July 2010

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venue & date to be announced shortly

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Information about SW Noda activities and our own "What's on" page.

*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.