

*National Operatic & Dramatic
Association*

South West Amateur Theatre Magazine

"A First-rate Opportunity"

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TRUDY DYKE reports on District 8 (S.Somerset)

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JACK AND THE BEANSTALK, Polden Productions, Village Hall, Eddington, 27th February 2009
Director/Musical Director: Ros Dolding Choreographer: Carol Applegate

This *Jack and The Beanstalk* was traditional Panto at its best. The whole company, ranging in age between 6 and 60, delivered a highly polished performance. Piccalilli (Nicky Mills) opened the show by giving us a taste of her evil tongue and making an instant connection with the audience; making sure good prevailed she was equally matched by Fairy Sugar Dust (Frances Groves). Jo Turley played Jack, the thigh slapping Principal Boy, whose smile lit up the stage every time she appeared. Double act Snatchett (Mike Taylor) and Scarper (Karen Oram) the bungling broker's men literally threw themselves into their roles. Jack's brother Simple Simon (Will Howlett) was the lovable village idiot with his combination of wide eyed innocence and great comic timing. Dame Dotty Dibble (Stephen Fry), with her long fluttering eyelashes and a wardrobe to die for, was a delight to see in action. Jo Ditchburn (Princess Primrose) sang 'On My Own' beautifully whilst being tied to a chair and set at the back of the stage, no mean feat! Singing and dialogue by both principals and company was strong and well projected. Choreography was tailored to suit all abilities. Costumes, Scenery and Staging had all been well thought out and enhanced the production.

HIGH SOCIETY, Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society, Octagon Theatre, 3rd March 2009
Director/Choreographer: Jeremy Tustin Musical Director: Pete Harrison

Y.A.O.S's production of "*High Society*" burst into live as soon as the overture started when servants and various wedding guests bustled around the stage leading into the show's title song *High Society* introducing Tori Blackshaw (Tracy) who was just one of many new faces making their debut with Y.A.O.S each one adding their own unique talents to this production. Jeremy Tustin also making his debut with Y.A.O.S made good use of the company involving them in the action wherever possible and creating some lovely cameo characters including a kleptomaniac! Choreography was tailored to suit all abilities and added to the party atmosphere. The Musicians and one or two Principals parted company once or twice as they struggled to keep in time; perhaps this was due to First Night nerves! Overall this was an enjoyable production.

ANNIE, Glastonbury & Street Musical Comedy Society, Strode Theatre, Street, 2nd April
Director: Brian Epps Choreographer: Sheila Driver Musical Director: Lynne Merrifield

Glastonbury and Street MCS's "Annie" hit all the right notes. From the opening scene in the orphanage Emily Symonds Wilmott, playing Annie, set the bar for this production, melting our hearts as she sang 'Maybe'. Emily's portrayal of Annie was feisty, leaving us in no doubt that she was 'number one' in the orphanage. Jo McCartney played the permanently inebriated Miss Hannigan stumbling around the orphanage trying to control the orphans. Jo's rendition of 'Little Girls' was spiced with just the right amount of humour and hatred. Jane Sayer's (Grace Farrell, P.A to Oliver Warbucks) beautiful singing was a delight to listen to. Warbucks (Barry Squance) was played with equal arrogance and self importance so as to gradually soften as his relationship with Annie developed but not lose his credibility. Shyster Rooster Hannigan (Shaun Driver) and his sidekick Lily St.Regis (Aimee Barlow) together delivered some dark comedy and a show stopping dance routine to 'Easy Street'. All the orphans had their own unique characters and lit up the stage each time they appeared. Company and chorus adopted many different guises playing the minor roles which kept the action moving.

THE MIKADO, Milborne Port Opera, Village Hall, Milborne Port 16th April

Producer/Director: Geoff Allen Director/Choreographer: Naomi Booth Musical Director: Caroline D'Cruz

Milborne Port Opera dared to be different transforming their Village Hall into a Japanese Kabuki Theatre! 'If You Want To Know Who We Are' took on a whole new meaning as the men marched onto the stage, dressed in coloured karate suits and painted faces, not a fan in sight. Lloyd Davies's (Ko-Ko) delivery of 'As Some Day It May Happen' was particularly amusing, peppered with references to today's celebrity culture and politics. Po- Bah (Andrew Armstrong) played his many 'roles' with aplomb. 'Comes a Train of Little Ladies' not a little bit afraid. With their painted faces and donning karate suits entered cart wheeling and displaying their various martial arts skills. Jessie Copper (Yum-Yum) and Anthony White (Nanki-Poo) complemented one another vocally and together delivered some very subtle comedic moments. When Katisha (Sarah Bignell) made her entrance, her powerful voice and clipped diction resonated to the back of the hall. The Mikado (Bernard Gardner) matched her perfectly in stature and voice. Without doubt the backbone of this "Mikado" was its Chorus with their strong operatic voices. This production ticked all the boxes! I've got them on the list!

OLIVER!, The Benham Academy of Dance, Strode Theatre, Street, 18th April

Producer/Choreographer, Gemma Benham Musical Director, Martin Emslie

"*Oliver !*" may seem a strange choice for a Dance Academy to perform where boys are not plentiful! But this proved to be no obstacle for Gemma Benham's enthusiastic company. Primarily this was a dance show where the musical numbers and routines gave everyone a chance to display their dancing ability and experience their moment in the spotlight! Hannah Cloonan's portrayal of Oliver was feisty and vulnerable in equal measure, especially when she sang 'Where is Love'. Bumble (Max Nicholson-Lailey) and Widow Corney's (Abbie Bown) delivery of 'I Shall Scream' had the audience in stitches. Francesca Fallows (Artful Dodger) attacked her role with gusto; leaving us in no doubt that Artful Dodger was Fagin's favourite! The role of Fagin is a difficult one and can challenge even the most seasoned performers; Joe Garrett took the role and made it his own. Claire Switzer playing Nancy delivered a powerful performance and when she sang 'As Long As He Needs Me' there was not a dry eye in the house! Ryan Linham's portrayal of Bill was truly horrible, giving his character an unnerving sinister demeanour. Congratulations to all behind the scenes that kept this large cast and show moving.

MY FAIR LADY, Wells Operatic Society, Little Theatre, Wells, 22nd April
Director: Lois Harbinson Choreographer: Carol Applegate Musical Director: Sheila Ross

Well's My Fair Lady was Luv-err-lee! Entering the auditorium you could almost smell the flowers of Covent Garden! Costermongers warmed their hands and Eliza Doolittle (Kate Lynch) was trying to sell her flowers! Eliza's first encounter with Colonel Pickering (Frank Edgeller) and Henry Higgins (Richard Wright) created chemistry between them which they carried right through the show. Richard's portrayal of Higgins was spot on! Totally immersed in his character, arrogant and rude but with a twinkle in his eye! Frank Edgeller's playing of Colonel Pickering was to the manor born. Kate Lynch never stopped working, even when the focus was not on her, her comic timing was natural and not contrived and the way she sang 'Just You Wait' was one of the highlights of the show. Mark Wall as Alfred P Doolittle the dustman facing a moral dilemma! Delivered a strong and energetic performance. Company movement and singing complemented production. The set was a work of art! Backstage crew moved like an oiled machine enabling the scene changes to appear seamless.

SEUSSICAL – THE MUSICAL, Wells Youth Theatre, Little Theatre, Wells, 6th June 2009
Director/Choreographer: Sarah Neale Musical Director: Russell Collins

Seussical is an ideal vehicle for a youth group to perform, with its many lively musical numbers and zany storyline it gives the whole company the chance to shine. Georgia Wall as Cat in the Hat gave her character as master of ceremonies equal measure of mischievousness and pizzazz as she invited us to imagine what 'Thinks' are lurking inside! Taking us into the world of Seuss we are transported to the Jungle of Nool. Here we meet Horton (Oliver Healey) the caring Elephant! GertrudeMcFuzz (Claire Switzer) a bird with only one tail feather who wants to be noticed! Mayzie Labird (Stacey Dorling) the flamboyant bird with amazing feathers! Jo Jo (Olivia Kerton) a little girl with a wild imagination! This strange mix of misfits provided most of the action. Each of these young people had a full understanding of what was expected from their characters and delivered some fine performances. Minor principals and ensemble of various ages and abilities worked well together and enhanced the production. Choreography was lively and exciting and gave this young company many ways to express themselves. Costumes of various vibrant colours and textures complemented the painted jungle fixed set. This was a 'Fantastical' evening's entertainment.

STRANDED, CUDOS, Victoria Hall, Crewkerne, 6th May 2009
Director: Quintin Mitchell

CUDOS are never afraid to tackle something new. "Stranded" is an observation piece set on a mythical train station somewhere in Middle England. A drunken young reveller (Joe Williams) staggers around the platform looking for his cider bottle. Sitting waiting for their train we see Alfred (Richard Walters) and Glenda (Angie Eason) the hen pecked husband and his overbearing wife, who since her arrival at the station has in her own inimitable manner managed to reduce the poor platform assistant (Ian Wickens) into a quivering wreck hiding in his office. Hippy Reflexologist Carmen (Amanda Perry) complete with 'karma' and mini-skirted Crystal wearing her 'kinky boots' are next to arrive at Fairy Glen and their conversation soon turns to feet and Carmen's 'karma'. Eastenders, long suffering Mary (Diana English) with friends, bipolar Tom (Ben Hodgson) and mentally retarded Baz (Karl Edwards) made an interesting trio. Sidney (Pete Drury) as the cuckolded husband about to leave his wife, tart without a heart Sharon (Helen Wickens) was like an accident waiting to happen. Last to arrive was Georgie (Danielle Chritchley) the 'loner' with her bag of mints full of the joys of spring. She is saccharine sweet you soon

see why she's alone. This mix of characters produced some fine performances each pulling on a full range of emotions, at some points making you squirm and others reducing you to tears of laughter with their farcical antics and others drawing hard on the heartstrings of sadness.

HOW THE OTHER HALF LOVES, Wells Little Theatre, 8th July

Director: Richard Wright

Wells Little Theatre's production of Alan Ayckbourn's complicated play set in two living rooms featuring three couples each from different ends of the social strata, who have very different wants and needs and each possessing very different social skills! Richard Wright (Director) also played Frank Foster a man in his 'prime' who sees the world through rose coloured spectacles and is blissfully unaware of his wife Fiona's (Anne Scullard) sexual frustrations and indiscretion with one of his employees Bob Phillips (Gerald Evers) the office Romeo who is married to Teresa (Sandra Marshall) the ever tired disorganised young mum! She in contrast to the designer clad Fiona looks as if she got dressed in the dark! William Featherstone (Tris Hann) the office bore and Mary (Elly Millin) his wife the timid little mouse complete the set. Each couple struggles through a gamut of different emotions when their lives become entwined by situations brought about by their frustrations and deceptions which produced some beautiful comedic moments. The backbone of this production was without doubt the stage crew who swiftly rearranged furniture and props, the converting dining table was a work of art! Congratulations to all. This play was never going to be easy to produce but by working as a team you pulled it off.

HELLO, DOLLY!, CUDOS, Victoria Hall, Crewkerne, 11th September

Director: Diana English Choreographer: Lisa Gage Musical Director: Jean Rudd

'Hello, Dolly!' is essentially 'Dolly' the matchmaker and meddler, and it is she, this 'Charismatic' confident woman who weaves her magic into the lives she touches. C.U.D.O.S's enthusiastic company opened in tabaleu in preparation for Dolly's (Charmaine Brays) entrance. It was rather tentative and did not quite make the impact expected. After the wobbly start and change of scene the show livened up as we met cantankerous Horace Vandergelder (Greg Groves) with his acerbic tongue and chocolate covered peanuts, unshelled! Cornelius Hackl (Richard Walters) his long suffering employ who works for a pittance and longs for an 'adventure' before he's too old to enjoy it along with his sidekick Barnaby Tucker (Keith Allington) whose only want is to see the 'whale' together joined by the male chorus delivered an energetic, "It Takes A Woman". Sarah Elliott played widow Irene Molloy with an air of elegance and a twinkle in her eye! Minnie Fay (Vikki Rolley) her dizzy assistant whose bubbly personality and use of facial expressions spoke louder than words! One of the highlights of this production was The Waiter's Gallop with its well timed choreography. Bodgit and Scarper's set was first rate as was the slick scene changing by the crew which kept the show moving.

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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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.