

*National Operatic & Dramatic
Association*

South West Amateur Theatre Magazine

"A First-rate Opportunity"

AUTUMN 2009

STUART LYDDON reports on District 9 (Mid-Somerset)

Production	Society
My Fair Lady	Clevedon Light Opera Club
Gang Show 2009	Taunton Scouts & Guides
Hello, Dolly!	Bridgwater A. O. S.
Grand Hotel	Taunton Amateur Operatic Society
Brightlings Strike Again	Clevedon Comedy Club
South Pacific	Weston-super-Mare O. S.
Return to the Forbidden Planet	Worle O. & D. Society

MY FAIR LADY, Clevedon Light Opera, Princes Hall, 17th March 2009

Producer: Jeff Prescott Assistant Director: Ros Francombe Choreographer: Julie Ashton

Musical Director: Barry Smith

It was pleasing to be greeted by street sellers enticing the audience, not only to buy their wears, but welcoming everyone; creating an atmosphere before the show began. A full bodied sound of warm orchestration within the entr'acte enticed the listener to envelop the mood with wholesome effect. Textual delivery from Anne Brock (Eliza) and Jeff Prescott (Professor Higgins) provided an engaging brace of personalities with the remainder of listed characters stamping their own personalities upon the script. Choreographed and cultured movement from the ladies and gentlemen of the chorus highlighted the differing atmospheres and styles. Energy, life and joy in faces, laughter from the 'riffraff' with sincere dialogue engrossed the audience. With the limitations of the hall it was impressive the way the set design / construction was engineered and executed. Neutral colour patterns on SL & SR flats, with a seemingly noiseless truck, ensured continuity and pace didn't hinder the enjoyment of the production. The costumes were splendid throughout with Eliza's dress in the ballroom scene, complete with tiara, very picturesque. Make-up added extra characteristics and technical elements complemented a wholesome production; lighting understood each scene requirement, with sound balancing the voices audibly rendering the text for clarity.

GANG SHOW 2009, Taunton Scouts & Guides, Brewhouse Theatre, 10th April 2009

Producer/Director: Dave Mullen Choreographers: Maureen Leach & Jenny Davey

Musical Director: Joanne Buck Technical Director: Derek Tilley

Production values must hold thought and energy with every song and sketch performed. The formula undertaken maintained the focus with opportunities abound for performers and technicians to exercise their skill in many formats. Participants were challenged with songs covering many decades which the vast majority were not even born when first released. But learning and enjoyment is an asset which the S & G movement motivating generations in performances. Triangular flats utilised space and were efficiently moved with the back-projection, giving depth. The lighting design held a richness and intelligence, with stage management coping with the demands of each set. The wardrobe department did a wonderful job and matching footwear worn by all! It was enjoyable to watch the performances with attention going into aspects of stage craft; never looking down, looking up and out into the audience and smiling, it all made a big difference! Dialogue was always heard with robust clarity of singing and

harmonising to-boot. This production crew played an important role in the creativity with the colour throughout, energetic and full of life. The snake movement admirably performed during the finale left a hope in the heart ably served up by this Scout & Guide troupe.

HELLO, DOLLY!, Bridgwater Amateur Operatic Society, Town Hall, 24th April
Director: Alan Calaminus Choreographer: Shelley Smith Musical Director: Tony Pomeroy

Constructive direction of movement allowed the cast to show a welcomingly diversity to the lives of the characters portrayed. Musical direction found clarity of voice with full volume harmonising, attractive to listen to and appreciated. Effective continuity was achieved through the transitions proving that the design had been intelligently planned. Colour of sets with the lighting design, produced a rich feel to the stage aided by a props department fulfilled and enhanced each establishment. The wardrobe and make-up teams produced a vibrancy of colour, a good mix of costume throughout ensured that characters held their own value and status, adorned with suitable wigs and hair styles. It was very pleasing to see that the gentlemen were wearing jazz or specifically quiet shoes, a detail noted and fully appreciated. There was a healthy level of energy, the comic antics of Barnaby and Dolly's presence, examples of lively and believable performances. Two scenes that grab the attention, Parade and "Waiters' Gallop" cemented an order book fit for the occasion. Juggling ribbons, a precision drilled Majorette team, a human pyramid of Waiters well choreographed and actioned. This presentation held many positive aspects, visibly enjoyed by the cast and fully appreciated by the audience.

GRAND HOTEL, Taunton Amateur Operatic Society, Brewhouse Theatre, 27th April
Director/Choreographer: Scott S. Martyn Musical Director: Matthew Tilke

The open stage with elegant revolving door, rows of simple stylish chairs positioned on chequered black and white flooring, with chandelier glitteringly looking down, oozed the importance of the establishment and the people contained within. Additionally with no interval, the dependency of fully engrossing the audience throughout is paramount to this production and its success. Cast members handled the manoeuvring of furniture around well, never allowing the continuity to subside. Choreography grew with intensity, poetically filling the intentions of the scenes. Musical Direction brought highlights to the score with vocal elements enjoying the hiatus of the crafted work. Having 'blacks' as a backdrop to the simple yet very stylised set, centred a focus of attention and demanded the lighting design carry an important factor to the voyeur. This was well engineered with several techniques completing an all-round display with mood enhancing moments. Costumes were a delightful feast, dressed with period extras such as eye-pieces/glasses. Make-up caught the moment of time expressively, the wigs and hairstyles enriched the overall look. As any first time actor prepares to cross the line between the safety of the wings and the cauldron of a lit stage, challenges of this show were undertaken and embraced.

BRIGHTLINGS STRIKES AGAIN, Clevedon Comedy Club, Princes Hall, May
Director: Val Vella Choreographers: Janice Mitchell, Shelley-Anne Douglas & Val Vella
Musical Director: Gaynor Burgess

Hooray for Brightlings say I! Compiled and directed by Val Vella, these trips to Brightlings have passed into North Somerset lore and have included holiday camps– Hi-de-Hi style and cruiseships, to the delight of their ardent fans. Who can ever forget the surreal effect from the "Red Barrows" a few years ago? This latest offering was no less effective and incorporated a Fawcett Towers style hotel where, needless to say, nothing worked! Set in Burnham-on-Sea, many contemporary incidents included "Brightlings Got Talent" and several Joyce Grenfell classics, culminating in Val's special version of

Victoria Wood's "Aerobics". Expertly compered by 'Hotel manager' Ian Perry, we were treated to auditions for the big party night. This produced several star turns and Brightlings own Susan Boyle in the form of Kerrie Barry, whose Abba number was a highlight. Many other amusing characters abounded, including not one but two Elvis look-alikes, all attractively costumed and entering into the spirit of this fun production with enthusiasm and energy. Fine support from the MD and musicians as well as an efficient crew ensured a good evening's entertainment, which augurs well for the future.

SOUTH PACIFIC, Weston-super-Mare Operatic Society, The Playhouse Theatre, 1st April

Director: Robbie Burns Choreographer: Emma Duffill Musical Director: John Johnson

Cast members displayed a healthy diversity of personnel as befitting the expectation of characters one would image embracing their characterisations in mannerisms and chemistry. Reactions all appeared natural expressing the differing cultural traits and importantly, the sincere approach undertaken. The comedic moments were well exploited against the poignancy of the inter-racial tensions bringing the substance out to its theme. Strong vocal work from the ensemble together with Emile's voice, much loved by the audience, captivated each scene enriching the charming libretto as one would expect. Production scenery gave a clear and vivid indication of its south pacific location with purposeful imagery. The slopped stage added a dimensional aspect as did the palm stalks and corrugated cloth from the various scenes. Wardrobe and make-up created the period setting, cementing the overall design. Choreography displayed sharp and expressive movement utilising the area given. Musical Direction got to grips with the vocal demands ensuring that the audience weren't disappointed, for many lips were in sync with the performers when delivered. Always with such a well-known and celebrated musical it's hard to hit the spot that the audience expects, but the Direction and performances in this presentation ticked the right boxes and didn't disappoint.

RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET,

Worle Operatic & Dramatic Society, The Blakehay Theatre, Weston-super-Mare, April

Director: Bob Gibbons Choreographer: Charlotte Lee Musical Director: Ann Bond

Graeme Savage reports:-

In the same week that a new Star Trek film breathed life into an ailing franchise, could WODS do the same for a musical, itself approaching an unbelievable 20 years of age? The answer is definitely yes, as this slightly revamped ... Forbidden Planet introduced us to a larger, and livelier crew than often seen in this production, as well as the usual larger than life characters. Bob Gibbons direction ensured that the hustle and bustle on board the Starship Albatross was continuous without detracting from the main story. Unfortunately, the best efforts of all the cast were frequently overpowered by the band, and seriously hampered by some very poor sound control, rendering many of the solos, particularly the female voices, completely inaudible, and veering to very distorted dialogue. Some hesitant musical direction led to some cautious entries to a few of the numbers, when 'big bangs' were required, although once they hit their stride, the band performed the rock'n'roll numbers well. As the principals dealt with these problems very professionally, Leighton Cole's Captain Tempest and Natalie Kessel's Miranda particularly impressed as the star-crossed lovers, given good support by Lizzie Hardy (Bosun), Anna Gibbons (Navigation Officer) and Mike Hardy (Cookie). The energy of the very well-costumed chorus of humanoids and aliens was non-stop and infectious, which is essential for this production, and the detailed set, full of blinking lights, and well-controlled video projections gave them plenty with which to interact.

SUE POMEROY reports on District 9

Production	Society
Iolanthe	Weston-Super-Mare Savoyards
Disney's Aladdin	Winscombe Youth Theatre
Murdered to Death	Mendip Players
An Audience With -	Nailsea Musicals
Into the Woods	Clevedon Light Opera Club
Company	Weston-super-Mare Operatic Society

IOLANTHE, Weston-super-Mare Savoyards, Blakehay Theatre, May

Directors: Dennis Carter & Sue Richards Musical Director. Carol Penhorwood

“*Iolanthe*” has an absurd story, but with such brilliant words & music by masters of satire Gilbert & Sullivan it is always such fun. This production was no exception. The established cast ably demonstrated warmth, humour and harmonious singing with all the principal roles agreeably portrayed by experienced players. That the company could pull off an undoubted success with such limited facilities was a credit to the cast, director, MD and whole production team. The charming costumes from ‘*Carousel Costume Hire*’ added an extra sparkle to the action particularly the inspired legs and footwear of the mature fairies! It was disappointing to note that the production was less than a box office success, and I sincerely hope the production budget was not too adversely affected by the lack of ‘bums on seats’. With the storyline centring on fairies and the House of Lords, it was very satisfying to hear some principal players ad lib with some spot on asides referring to current events in political life! Very amusing. Congratulations must go to director Dennis Carter who due to a cast members indisposition, admirably stepped in at the dress rehearsal and all performances to play the Earl of Mountarat.

DISNEY'S ALADDIN, Winscombe Youth Theatre, Community School, Churchill, June

Director Theresa Hemming Musical Director Catherine Kennell

Those of us in the world of amateur theatre should be pleased that there are folk working tirelessly with young people, ensuring that future generations are imbued with the love of the musical that has given many of us much pleasure over the years. These youngsters will hopefully ensure the continuity of the amateur stage. Theresa Hemming and Catherine Kennell, must spend countless hours working with the children from the ages of four to thirteen and they brought an enthusiastic audience the colourful Disney version of Aladdin with its well-known story and songs from the popular cartoon film. The children ranged in ability as well as age but their obvious enthusiasm was infectious. Amazingly, the production team had double and triple cast the leading roles to enable as many performers as possible to experience the commitment and thrill of playing a leading role and if the leads at other performances were as high-quality as the team on Friday night, remembering the age of these performers, the production team should be well pleased. Judging by the applause at the end of the show the cast had done an excellent job transporting us on a carpet to the magical world of Aladdin.

MURDERED TO DEATH, Mendip Players, Memorial Hall, July

Director: Phil Marshall

An excellent ‘home grown’ set and period props led us to a country house straight out of the 1930’s Poirot or Miss Marple and we all settled down to enjoy a spoof comedy murder mystery. After a rather

slow opening, which set the scene for a country house weekend with an assortment of expected visitors, the pace picked up with a murder and the entrance of the buffoon like Inspector Pratt and his straight side kick Constable Thompkins. All the elements of Agatha Christie were included; among which were a very strange butler named Bunting, an eccentric Colonel, a bogus Frenchman and Miss Maple (sic) the busybody friend. Occasionally forgetting it was a spoof we were always reminded with clever mispronunciations and double entendres. This was a cleverly written whodunit comedy written by Peter Gordon from copyright holders Josef Weinberger Ltd and will undoubtedly be chosen by drama clubs across the region when they realise its potential for an entertaining fun evening. To say all characters were believable is wrong, for what we saw were caricatures of folk we know well from film and TV and they did it very well.

AN AUDIENCE WITH NAILSEA MUSICALS, Methodist Church, Nailsea, July
Director/Musical Directors: Andy Thomas, Emily Waller, Mark Johnson, Simon Jennings-Webb

Following a traumatic short-notice change of venue, this large cast pulled out all the stops to present a roller coaster of music from such diverse shows as Gypsy, Wicked, JCSS, and Spamalot, presented to celebrate the 30th Year anniversary of Nailsea Musicals. The change of location resulted in a venue on one level and the crew turned a church into a theatre complete with sound system and theatrical lighting. An area at the front of the church was turned into the stage area by using drapes and stairs. The show, originally planned for 4 nights, became 2 nights with a larger audience and this was filled to capacity. I wasn't surprised because the wealth of talent particularly among the ladies and the junior section was remarkable. Using backing tracks, the cast sang us through old favourites and exciting new musicals with many of the company having an opportunity to shine in a solo spot. A Sondheim selection showed us the versatility of these performers and the show ended with a rollocking 'La Cage Aux Folles' section. As we left following a thoroughly enjoyable evening, we saw the hard working crew turning a theatre back into a church. Well done to everyone.

INTO THE WOODS, Clevedon Light Opera Club, Princes Hall, July
Producer: Jeff Prescott Choreographer: Emma Wright Musical Director: Sue Marsh

Sondheim shows are a bit like Marmite; many either love them or hate them. I love them, although occasionally I wonder why as they are often complex stories with discordant music. Clevedon's production demonstrated to me why I love them. 'Into the Woods' is a cleverly constructed show with every character needing to fulfill their potential and each is an integral part of the whole piece. The music is difficult, often jarring, but when performed with accuracy and talent and enthusiasm, it is a joy to hear and watch. Clevedon's production fulfilled all the criteria for an exceptional, appealing and riveting show and I enjoyed every moment. All the talented fairy tale characters gave good performances, but I must single out the excellent Natalie Prescott (Little Red Riding Hood), Craig Bennett & Lynda Prescott (The Baker & Baker's Wife) and the outstanding performance of Julie Ashton (The Witch). The costumes by Pat Evans were outstanding; and lighting and remarkable sound effects spot on. This was undoubtedly a team effort and everyone is to be congratulated on a splendid production. Jeff Prescott and Sue Marsh should be very pleased with everyone's hard work

COMPANY, Weston-super-Mare Operatic Society, St. Jude's Theatre, August
Director: Brian Buttle Musical Director: John Johnson

'Company' presented by members of Weston-super-Mare Operatic was a very professional and sparkling show. The talented members of the cast worked well together as a team under the experienced direction

of professional Brian Buttle. Set in New York in the 1970's '*Company*' finds Stephen Sondheim at his most cynical but musical best. 'Another Hundred People', 'Being Alive' and other gems like 'Barcelona', and 'Ladies Who Lunch' are just a few of many outstanding numbers. The '*Company*' company gave the audience sophisticated musical theatre at its very best. Performed in the society HQ, the production team should be congratulated for transforming it into a theatre with full stage and proscenium. John Johnson (Keyboard) and Ralph White (Percussion) enhanced performances by playing with skill and sensitivity. The 'full to capacity' audience of 70 were treated to delightful caricatures from all the players who so obviously enjoyed performing in this production. Brian Buttle ensured that these talented actors gave Weston's theatregoers a superb evening's entertainment. When other societies consider presenting Sondheim or other clever but less marketable shows, they could do worse than follow Weston's lead - keep it a low-key, high-quality production and then enjoy a sell out!

Youth Academy 2010, 6th - 9th 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 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.

NODA Summer School, Loughborough

1st - 8th August 2010 a week's concentrated theatre study

Bursaries worth almost half the cost available: apply now to Gerry Branton

Is your society's web-site linked to Noda ?

SOUTH-WEST REGIONAL WEBSITE

www.nodasw.com

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.