

Noda South-West Magazine Spring 2010
District 10 – South Wiltshire & East Somerset – Andrew Carpenter

***National Operatic & Dramatic
Association
South West Amateur Theatre
Magazine***

“Open a New Window”

SPRING 2010

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ANDREW CARPENTER reports on District 10

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THE FULL MONTY Frome Amateur Operatic Society Memorial Theatre, Frome

Director: Claudia Pepler-Berry Choreographers: Joni Carpenter & Sarah Planty
Musical Director: David Hynds

7th September 2009

Graeme Savage reports:-

The difficulty with a show such as this, where everyone knows the ending, is how do you keep the audience entertained before giving them what they've come for? Frome Amateur Operatic Society's cast bravely succeeded through a combination of cheeky charm, and a surprisingly heart-warming story buried beneath the piles of posing pouches, velcro'd trousers and body wax ! In Davey Evans as Jerry Lukowski and Kevin Withers as Dave Bukatinsky, the cast had two very likeable performers to lead the ragbag assortment of potential strippers on their journey, and all the strippers convinced in their respective stereotyped roles. The dramatic part of the story was performed with more conviction and confidence than some of the musical numbers (the finale excepted) although this wasn't helped by a poor sound balance which allowed the band to dominate the vocals of many of the solo numbers, and at times, completely masked the underscored dialogue. After a very energetic opening half, the pace became a little ponderous at times, particularly during Act Two – admittedly this could be due to the expectation of what is to come, but was hindered by some interminably slow scene changes as the crew appeared to be struggling with a set which felt too big and fussy for the Memorial Theatre stage. But the audience were in their element and credit to a lively and vociferous cast for encouraging this, and the sold out notices for the entire run speak for themselves.

DAISY PULLS IT OFF The Trowbridge Players The ARC Theatre, Trowbridge

30th September 2009

The visit to the ARC Theatre in Trowbridge for this presentation of "Daisy Pulls It Off" by The Trowbridge Players was my first official appointment as the newly elected representative for District 10 and I couldn't have wished for a more enjoyable baptism. I really enjoyed the interaction of the cast with the audience as we came in and was particularly impressed with the characterisations of all the actors. They were truly believable and the diction was excellent. There were some very amusing touches like the

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'station sign' in the railway scene. Another scene I thought made good use of the theatre was the 'cliff scene' which was handled and performed superbly. I do have a couple of comments to improve the standard even further inasmuch as I found the placing of the prompt in the gallery a little off putting, especially as he/she used a torch which shone out in the 'darker' scenes. Whilst I found the arrival of Dick, Douglas, Daniel and Duncan funny, it would have been funnier if I hadn't seen them waiting in the wings beforehand. On the positive side I must make mention of the backstage crew whose swift interventions throughout ensured a smooth running show. All the performances were noteworthy, but I must make special mention of Imogen Dunne in the title role; a mammoth performance for one so young. The audience on opening night was understandably excited, especially when Grangewood won the hockey match, and all I can say is Jubilate!

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Holiday Inn, Taunton 10:45 a.m.

Special Guest: Mrs. Margaret Coltman, President of Noda.

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GOOD KNIGHT SWEETHEART

The Bradfordians Dramatic Society

Village Hall, Freshford

Written & Directed by: Joffre White

29th October 2009

From the time I entered Freshford Village Hall to the moment I left I was swept back to medieval times by the Bradfordians production of "Good Knight Sweetheart", a murder mystery play. The Village Hall was well decorated and set out as the venue for a medieval banquet with musicians playing appropriate music beforehand to add to the atmosphere. Every attention to detail had been catered for with even the programmes being done up like a scroll. The murder mystery itself was 'just what was expected' from such a presentation with bawdy humour and innuendo throughout the piece and more red herrings than a fishmongers slab. I greatly enjoyed the comic characterisations of all seven players, particularly how they held those characterisations throughout questioning by the audience. I congratulate Joffre White on a very clever and well written script. My only disappointment was that the musicians didn't re-appear during the marking process at the end as I thought that the evening would have been enhanced for ten minutes at that time. I should say that the whole audience enjoyed an evening of good food, good company and good fun and I thank you all for a Good Night Out.

NATIONAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & AWARD CEREMONY

Palace Hotel, Torquay

Saturday 25th September 2010

*Your attendance is expected
on the occasion of the inauguration of
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Please put this date in your diary and encourage your members to come along too.

You are also invited to join in a weekend of special celebratory events

WEST END NOW!

Trowbridge Amateur Operatic Society

Arc Theatre

21st November 2009

I cannot think of a better way of spending a Saturday afternoon than to be listening to an array of wonderful music from an array of modern musicals performed by an array of talent from Trowbridge AOS. The production was impressive on so many levels. Firstly the idea to take the concert 'on tour' was a wonderful way of taking the Society into the outreaches of its fan base. Secondly by performing a concert, the members of the group were able to perform songs that are unlikely to become available to amateurs for many years and thirdly the way the concert was linked with a clever and witty story of husband and wife squabbling over which show to go and see as her birthday present. It was good to see so many members of this talented group given the opportunity to perform solos and duets, something not usually possible if one musical is performed, and it would be inappropriate to single out individual numbers. However, I must say that I thought Trowbridge AOS were at their very best when performing the ensemble numbers with "Masquerade" from "Phantom of the Opera" as probably the stand out number for me. Congratulations to all concerned.

AUTUMN GALA CONCERT

First Stages

Corn Exchange, Devizes

Producer & Artistic Director: Carole Berry

21st November 2009

Never before have I been asked to attend a concert in a nightclub before and so I was a little apprehensive before the show started. However my apprehension soon turned to admiration for this new and very talented group of young people. Having started life in January 2008 First Stages has obviously come a long way in a short period of time to be able to perform a concert of this quality. It would be inappropriate to single out any one individual performance as they were all to be congratulated, but if I had a favourite it was the ensemble performance of "Anthem" from the musical "Chess", which First Stages are to present at the Devizes Eisteddfod later in the year and which got a much deserved encore at the end of the concert. If I have one suggestion for the future it would be to use microphones suitable for the occasion as having hand held mics turned up full volume and used as stage mics caused unnecessary feedback at times and picked up footsteps and the like. This is a small point to make however and I offer

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my congratulations to Carole Berry and her team for a tremendous concert and for their hospitality before, during and after the performance.

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

SOUTH-WEST REGIONAL WEB SITE 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*

DICK WHITTINGTON
[John Morley]

The Alderbury Players

Village Hall, Alderbury

Director: John Jenner Choreographer: Amanda Watson Musical Director: Alison Larkham 3rd December 2009

It was no small feat to entertain a full scale pantomime on such a limited stage and I congratulate all concerned for managing it so successfully. The stage sets were most impressive, particularly the opening street scene and 'inside Fitzwarren's Store'. The costumes, too, added greatly to the piece as did the make up which was 'just right' for a production so close to its audience. It would be inappropriate to single out individual members of the cast for specific praise in what was a terrific 'team' effort. I really liked the introduction of 'current' material like the references to 'Strictly Come Dancing' and the 'Meerkat advertisement on TV'. I loved the little orchestra under the expert direction of Alison Larkham, and also the choice of numbers, particularly the Gilbert and Sullivan re-designed songs, but felt the pantomime would have been improved still further if some more contemporary numbers were included to complement the 'standards'. In conclusion I thank Alderbury Players for making my first visit to their village hall so enjoyable and say what a bright future they have with such a young and enthusiastic company. It was a real pleasure to be part of it and I look forward to my next visit with anticipation.

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THE MIKADO

Salisbury Amateur Operatic Society

Director: Alistair Donkin Musical Director: John Dempster

8th December 2009

Congratulations to the director for putting together a production that was slick, colourful and extremely well performed. The attention to detail was evident in so many ways. Probably the best example being the dexterity required by the cast in their use of those wonderful fans. This detail and discipline was a hallmark of this fine production. The clarity of diction, both in singing and in speaking, was another real strong point ensuring the wonderful Gilbert lyrics were enjoyed by one and all. We were treated to a number of delightful ‘pictures’ and the entire show was performed at real pace ensuring that the audience was always alive to what was happening. The set and costumes were most impressive and added to the spectacle of the piece. The music was of the highest calibre, both in terms of the playing by a superb orchestra under the direction of John Dempster, and the singing as performed by a very talented cast. I would like to pay tribute to all the principals and the entire ensemble and back stage crew for a near faultless performance. It would be inappropriate to single out individuals for praise as this was undoubtedly a team effort. The programme opened by saying that “*The Mikado*” has been performed more times than any other Gilbert and Sullivan opera. I would go as far as to say I’ve seen this G & S opera more than any other and this was without doubt the finest version I’ve seen.

SNOW WHITE and THE SEVEN DWARFS

Frome Amateur Operatic Society

Memorial Theatre, Frome

Director: Andrew Carpenter Producer: Joanne Plenty Choreographer: Sue McNamee

Musical Director: David Hynds

29th December 2009

Rich Newman reports:-

The first thing I noticed at the bright opening was the splendid costumes. The audience of all ages was with the cast right from the off, anticipating the ‘bad’ jokes and laughing with ones not seen coming. The humour throughout was levelled at all ages. Snow White's costume and hair were perfect as was Nichole Woodbridge's characterisation. The Dwarfs were wonderful. They had a lot to remember, but they never wavered. The principals complemented one another well and made the most of each opportunity to shine, but never stole the limelight from each other. The dancers, too, got in on the act with the “Forest Ballet” and “Thriller” being highlights. The company used several mics and this helped for a balanced sound with the very full-sounding seven-piece band. This Panto had all the ingredients you have come to expect and although there were one or two opening night “moments” the show moved along with pace to its inevitable conclusion. The show had some lovely touches, like the curtain closing for us to then hear an advert for Gold reclamation, and the finale. The latter while being slightly disconnected from the story line saw the principals coming on dressed as various pop stars and performing some verses of their hits. The Prince and Snow White, for instance, were Sandy and Danny from Grease singing-“You’re The One That I Want”. This worked very well. As we all left there was a lovely buzz from the audience who seemed to agree with me that this had been a most enjoyable evening.

NODA Summer School, Loughborough

– some places still available!

– antonia@noda.org.uk

ROBIN HOOD AND THE BABES IN THE WOOD

The Trowbridge Players

The ARC Theatre, Trowbridge

Written & Directed by: Angela Giddings Chorus Choreographer: Imogen Dunne

15th January 2010

This traditional pantomime had everything you could ask for and more! A very funny script, some delightful music, local references and an impressive cast line up. It was very challenging to attempt a fully blown pantomime production in such limited space, but they pulled it off – well done! You need a good dame to hold any pantomime together and in Pete Grant the Players had just that. His performance as Nanny Dora was the glue that held the entire piece together. I must say how impressed I was also with Lyn Taylor and Becky Holden as Picket and Pocket. Their comic timing and facial expressions really brought their roles alive. Angela Watson and Rachael Pratt made a delightful pairing as Robin Hood and Maid Marion. The Sheriff of Nottingham was forcibly portrayed by Tim Knott and having Jamie Dean as Handy Andy was an inspirational idea to get a panto animal into the script. I must make mention of those two delightful babes, on the night I came I saw Etain Dobson as Rosie and Cameron Runyard-Hunt as Pete. I'm sure their counterparts were equally good. I liked so much of the content, especially as there were so many good up-to-date inclusions. The traditional parts of panto were also there in abundance. I congratulate you all for providing a good fun night for all those present. What a shame there weren't more in the audience to enjoy all your hard work. Those that didn't come missed a real treat.

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PETER PAN

Broad Hinton Amateur Dramatic Society

Village Hall

Director: Marilyn Martin Musical Director: Jenni Moseling

22nd January 2010

This was my first visit to Broad Hinton and my first impression was one of a very vibrant community atmosphere the minute I walked into the newly erected facility. “Peter Pan” doesn’t lend itself too well to traditional pantomime. Having said that BHADS worked really well to provide the audience with first class entertainment and great fun throughout the evening. There was so much to applaud about this production; in particular the costumes which were outstanding as was the home-made scenery. I was wondering how you would handle the ‘flying scene’ in such a small venue and was most impressed with the technology used. With such a large cast it would be inappropriate to single out individuals, however I must say how impressed I was with Sarah Kromer as Slightly – you really couldn’t take your eyes off her when she was on stage. In addition Tinker Bell was very good indeed with dramatic facial expressions and a ‘death scene’ to die for! Being of a traditional nature, when it comes to pantomimes, I always like to see the dame played by a man. Jo McCombe gave a first class performance in the role, as did Ian Flemming as Smee. My congratulations to Broad Hinton ADS on producing such a splendid production of Peter Pan that provided enjoyment for a packed audience and for the cast as well I’m sure. I eagerly look forward to your next production in July.

The Wizard of Oz Tisbury Arts Group Nadder Hall, Tisbury

Director: Jon Bertenshaw Choreographers: Kat Paul & Wendy Spencer-Smith Musical Director: Nigel Edwards

29th January 2010

This was my first visit to Tisbury and my first impressions were of a very close knit community which had come together to put on this first class production of “*The Wizard of Oz*”. The cast tackled the story with gusto and got the most out of the script. I was particularly impressed with the performances of Sallyann Morris as The Lion and Liz Coyle-Camp as the wicked witch Olga. Darby Hayes was a delightful Dorothy and her American accent throughout was impeccable. Obviously you need a good dame in any successful pantomime and in Jon Amos as Aunt Em you had just that. They were ably aided and abetted by Karen Pollard as the Scarecrow, Sallianne Crosbie as Tinman and the unusual additional role of Elvis played by Jim Driscoll. The principal line-up was successfully completed by Polly Prior as Glinda, Justine Peroni as Letitia and Dan Evans as The Wizard; all of whom gave first rate performances. I was impressed with the imaginative scenery and the ‘disco’ lighting which added greatly to the more up tempo numbers. Costumes and make-up also impressed as did the wonderful music as supplied by Nigel Edwards and Robert Allan. One of the highlights of the show was the inclusion of so many young people and I congratulate Tisbury Arts Group for giving these young people this opportunity.

PINNOCHIO

The Nunney Players

Village Hall, Nunney

Directors: Bryony Brook & Maryl Cousins Choreographer: Mo Bell & Brenda Eaton

Musical Director: Francis Hayden

30th January 2010

Where does one start to offer congratulations on this first class production? Probably with the script and score, both of which are original. Frazer Pearce and Judith Beresford produced a clever script that kept faithfully to the original story, but also made it more ‘child friendly’. The score was an absolute delight

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and one found oneself humming the tunes as you left Nunney Village Hall – a true sign of successful music. Amber Brook, as Pinocchio, was on stage almost throughout the 90 minute production and I offer my congratulations on a first class performance. Special mention, too, must go to Liam McGee as Freddy Furtive whose acting, singing and movement were of the highest quality. Making notes, as I was throughout, I seemed to be forever writing ‘how good’ various imaginative parts of this production were; like the magic performed by Freddy Furtive, the puppets, the fish creatures under the sea and the absolutely brilliant whale. Then there was the ingenious coach and the quite brilliant funfair. These were all works of art in their own right. All in all this was a first class production from a first class team. It is difficult to believe that the quality of this production was achieved in a small village hall and I congratulate all concerned. Furthermore the quality of the script and the score I believe deserves more airing and I would suggest you try and get it published – I think NODA might be interested!

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“Holly Woods” 89 Stone Lane, Winterbourne Down, South Gloucestershire BS36 1DH 01454 773145

PUSS IN BOOTS Melksham Comedy Club Assembly Rooms, Melksham

Directors: Hereward Newton-Edwards & Simon Hoy Sound: Geoff Mitcham

4th February 2010

Choreographers: Amy Kippen, Katie Mence, Penny Smart, Jasmine Todd & Justin Haggett

I knew I was in for a fun night when I heard the pre-show announcements which were ‘Monty Python’ like and very funny. This was a show full of energy, enthusiasm and vitality that showed off this company in very good light. In Steve Forbes as Nosmo King and Justin Haggett as Nopar King you had two outstanding ‘knock-about’ whose comic timing was impressive and Chris Shuttleworth gave a Monty Pythonesque performance as the smooth and slimy Lord Rodger. Aimi Davies impressed as the narrator, Mich Povey made a very believable Jack and I congratulate Katie Mence on her first principal performance as Princess Alice. Rosie Raikes-May was a most impressive Puss with a very pleasant singing voice. In any pantomime you need a good dame and in John Clark as Auntie Hettie you had just that. Mark Peale looked most impressive as King Herbert and Donna Ruderman as Queen Mildred made a perfect foil for him. Matching those on stage as being the stars of this show were undoubtedly the magnificent props and accessories. The King Brothers Trapomatic, the birthday cake, the revolving contraption in the dungeon scene and the dragon were all most impressive. Well conceived, constructed and delivered. The company are to be congratulated as their obvious hard work and enthusiasm really paid off in this first rate production.

THE WITCHES [Roald Dahl adapted by David Wood]

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The Bradfordians Dramatic Society	St. Laurence School, Bradford-on-Avon
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Director: Phil Courage

17th February 2010

This was a first-rate production from a first-rate company, and what was particularly impressive throughout the play was the attention to detail. It was difficult to imagine that this production was being performed on a school stage, because both the set and scenery/props were of the highest standard and really helped to make this masterpiece. The special effects, too, like the motorised mouse, the kitchen scene puppetry and the magic, were brilliantly conceived and executed. Costumes, make-up and particularly the witches' wigs all added to the impressive detail expressed throughout the production. It would be inappropriate to single out individual members of the cast for praise as this was a true team effort. However, I must make special mention of the younger players, Charlie Dawson as 'Boy' and Edward Gabe as 'Bruno Jenkins', both gave excellent performances. Sue Bolden as Grandmother also acted as a central character that held this piece together. Of course the witches must be mentioned and what a motley crew they were! Susanna White as the Grand High Witch was demonstrably aloof and evil and certainly sent shivers up your spine when she delivered her libretto. I congratulate The Bradfordians for this entertaining presentation of '*The Witches*' and in particular pay tribute to Phil Courage for the quality of his direction that was evident in both the performances from cast members and quality of everything else that went into this first class production.