

Noda South-West Magazine Spring 2010  
District 14 – Bath, Swindon & Sodbury – Graeme Savage

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

**“Open a New Window”**

**SPRING 2010**

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## **GRAEME SAVAGE reports on District 14**

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Sweeney Todd	Bath Light Operatic Society
The Disappearance of Katie	B. O. D. S.
A Midsummer Night's Dream	The Court Players
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Godspell	Zenith Youth Theatre Company

<b>DON'T DRESS FOR DINNER</b>	<b>Sodbury Players</b>	<b>Town Hall, Chipping Sodbury</b>
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*Directors: Andrew Stubbs & Pete Williamson*

*11<sup>th</sup> September 2009*

Another of Sodbury Players' trademark elaborate sets immediately transported us to a gite just outside of Paris for this equally elaborate farce, performed with great enthusiasm. As can often be the way in farce, some characters are given very little opportunity to develop, at the expense of the writer wanting to get the plot rattling along as quickly as possible, and that was the case here. However, Rob Creer and Nicky Shipton did well to quickly set up the apparently happy husband and wife, both determined to meet their secret lovers, and make sure we were all aware of the chaos that was about to ensue. With one-dimensional characters such as these, it is left for the actors to really get to grips with the wordplay and situation, rather than anything else too deep and meaningful, and the whole cast certainly did this with great relish. It is a compliment to them that the audience never lost sight of the myriad twists and turns Katie Salt, in particular, showed great comic timing as the wife/sister/cousin/waitress, and Grant McCotter's explanatory monologue in act two was brilliantly executed. All four actors showed a great chemistry onstage, complemented well by Sarah Dean and Richard Cottle in the smaller cameo roles, and strong direction ensured that the chaotic scenes were suitably manic without going out of control. If at times the pace dropped a little, this had more to do with the writer's determination at the end of Act Two to explain everything, rather than to give more credit to the audience. This didn't stop the audience enjoying an excellent evening's double-crossing and wife-swapping!

### **NATIONAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & AWARD CEREMONY**

**Palace Hotel, Torquay**

***Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2010 @ 2:00 p.m.***

*Your attendance is expected on the occasion of the inauguration of*

***our very own Gerry Branton as National President***

*Please put this date in your diary and encourage your members to come along too.*

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

**SWEENEY TODD**

**Bath Light Operatic Society**

**Theatre Royal, Bath**

*Director: Brian Buttle    Musical Director: Matthew Finch*

*18<sup>th</sup> September 2009*

**Stuart Lyddon** reports:-

With pre-show interaction of cast with audience, the scenario and period was substantially established. Musical Direction delivered a quality of instrumental balance and clarity of words throughout. The substantial set depicted the requirements and gave dimensional aspects which were used effectively. Floor space was limited but direction ignored any handicap that this gave and utilised all that was available. The stage crew dressed each scene with the minimum amount of fuss and even to the extent that it seemed to 'just appear'. The lighting design gave important atmospheric meaning not only when the 'blood letting' was at its height but also with strong imagery and shading. Sound added plenty of additional atmosphere with piercing screeches during the throat cutting, very idyllic. Make-up contributed a markedly intuitive course for enhancing features with hairstyles and wigs complementing the actors within their roles. Performances were honest and truthful; Todd – Philip Cox and Mrs Lovett – Lesley Chapman displayed a necessary chemistry between themselves; chorus narration worked in tandem with all the action that occurred and the poignancy of the caged songbird was beautifully captured in voice by Johanna – Emily Froggatt. Using two sets of principals, this company meet the challenges this Sondheim musical demands.

**THE DISAPPEARANCE OF KATIE**

**Bath Operatic & Dramatic Society**

**The Rondo Theatre, Bath**

*Director: Viv Jackson*

*October 2009*

**Frankie Telford** reports:-

This comedy by Don Cherrett and Evan Thomas was new to me. Mr and Mrs Villiers are about to celebrate their Silver Wedding Anniversary, but Mr Villiers is away on business and has apparently forgotten about it. He gave his wife a figurine (Katie) on their wedding day that is much treasured; so he plans to surprise her with a gift of a male companion figurine for their Anniversary. He secretly returns to the house expecting it to be empty. It is not, and many complications ensue. The play requires a complex set as the action takes place in the sitting room of the Villiers' house, and the script demands a window, which characters peer in through, a front door, exit to the kitchen, exit to upstairs and a practical broom cupboard. The cast handled the difficulties well. On opening night the play did not always move at the required pace, but I am sure this would speed up with confidence during the week. There were several well-defined supporting roles, particularly the Italian vacuum sales man, whose timing was excellent. The play lent itself to the intimacy of this delightful theatre.

**A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**

**The Court Players**

**The Memorial Hall, Rangeworthy**

*Producer & Director: Gordon Jones Co-director: Rosemary Pearce*

*8th October 2009*

The Court Players always impress with the atmosphere that they can conjure up in an otherwise unremarkable village hall. The creative team transported us back to a beautifully lit Athenian court, and the surrounding woods. A cleverly concise adaptation ensured that what may have been sacrificed from the poetry was more than made up for with one of the funniest productions of a Shakespeare comedy that I have seen for a long time. Too often, Shakespeare's humour drowns in the worthiness of the language, but Gordon Jones's assured direction ensured that was never the case here. This was also aided by a lack

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of ‘gimmick’ in the production – a traditional production, rather than going for a more contemporary, modern or edgy interpretation, kept the audiences focus clearly on the characters. Special mention must be made of the four ‘young lovers’, particularly Antonia Parker-Smith (Hermia) and Edward Berry (Lysander), and Amelia Trunk as Puck – all young teenagers, who gave very mature performances, unfazed by the unique challenges of Shakespeare’s text. Of the older members, Paul Binding (Oberon) and Christine James (Titania) particularly stood out, and the Rude Mechanicals lived up to their name with a hilarious and lively rendition of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, in which Sarah Cole’s Snug/Lion was a delightful piece of comic minimalism. It is always a pleasure to see a company with such a wide age range working together, supporting each other and learning from each other, and giving the evening a real buzz.

*18<sup>th</sup> July 2010*

**SOUTH-WEST REGIONAL**  
**AGM & AWARD CEREMONY**

**Holiday Inn, Taunton at 10:45 a.m.**

**Guest of Honour: Mrs. Margaret Coltman, National President of Noda**

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

*Lunch also available at £12 a head.*

*Send a cheque to Denis Branton made payable to \Noda South-West.*

**THE HARPER VALLEY HEARTBREAK EXPRESS**

**Keynsham Light Operatic Group Saltford Hall, Saltford**

*Director: Sally Thompson Choreographers: Tracey Dean with Effie Corby Musical Director: Keith Warhurst*

*22<sup>nd</sup> October 2009*

In this compilation show, based primarily on the works of Dolly Parton, and many of her Country & Western peers, writer and director Sally Thompson, with MD Keith Warhurst, has shown a huge depth of knowledge to create an enjoyable and coherent musical. In a style reminiscent of Robert Altman’s ‘slice of life’ films or plays such as *The Blue Room*, Sally had skilfully created a town where many different couples, families and colleagues’ lives intertwined. As background characters from one scene stepped

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forward to reveal their story in the next, the musical styles on show were much more wide-ranging than C&W is often given credit for. In a strong ensemble company, many of KLOGs hard-working regular chorus members were given a chance to take the limelight, and didn't disappoint. The onstage band was a nice touch. The sets were simple but effective, and some unconventional effects were good to see from this usually traditional company - the film of travelling through the countryside; and the dance performed in silhouette, as was the story of Big John (brilliantly delivered by Sam Crossfield). My only criticisms would be some slightly fussy scene changes, hindering the pace, and that perhaps the show could have been 15-20 minutes shorter, as the episodic stories began to feel a little disjointed. Congratulations to all involved for creating a show which, in structure, can definitely hold its head up high next to the more famous 'juke-box' musicals in the West End.

**CINDERELLA**

**Bath Unity Players**

**Kingswood Theatre, Bath**

*Director/Choreographer: Katrina Cowie Additional Choreography: Deborah Curtis*

*Musical Director: Julia Barratt*

*16<sup>th</sup> December 2009*

An enthusiastic start to the pantomime season from Bath Unity Players, full of wonderful costumes, elaborate sets, lively dancing from the Curtis School of Dance and plenty of good old-fashioned panto humour. All the traditional characters fared well, with Sam Kelly as Buttons doing his best to hold the proceedings together – a very worthy effort from one of the younger members of company. He showed a lovely chemistry with Annie John's Cinderella, although both of these performers were hindered by the audience being so far away, and this stopped them from developing the rapport with the audience which is so essential. I'm sure once they were closer to the audience on other evenings, they would have settled into their roles more comfortably, as both had very warm personalities which their characters required. The older members of the company also coped well with this slightly disorientating layout, ensuring that the story was clear, aided by some simple yet effective direction. In a large company Philip Thorpe as Baron Hardup, and Lynda Tucker as his wife particularly stood out, and Michael Auton and Ian Cowie were suitably outrageous as the Ugly Sisters. The songs were well chosen, but could have done with some slightly stronger accompaniment as the cast occasionally seemed to be holding back (although this could again have been due to the audience feeling so remote). A good effort from this very traditional company, which will have provided great family entertainment once the few opening night wobbles were overcome

**PANTO AT THE OK CORAL Wootton Bassett Light Operatic Society Memorial Hall**

*Director: Ros Vickers Choreographers: Kim Pethybridge & Ros Vickers*

*29<sup>th</sup> January 2010*

**Andrew Carpenter** reports:-

This was my first visit to Wootton Bassett and my first impressions were very good. A warm welcome and a tremendous community atmosphere awaited me together with a very colourful and enthusiastic production. I was immediately impressed with the costumes and scenery, which set the scene for a most enjoyable evening. The inclusion of a large youth contingent also makes for a wonderful community pantomime and I congratulate WBLOS for including so many young people in this production. Being a traditionalist when it comes to panto, it took me a while to get into the cowboy characters as opposed to a usual line-up. However once there I got carried away, as did the rest of the audience, on our journey through the Wild West. I was most impressed with the accents, which were carried throughout the production with clarity and consistency. The constant stream of local references was always well received as was very well chosen string of musical numbers by a very generous opening night audience. With such a large cast it would be inappropriate to single out individuals, however, I must say how much I enjoyed the singing of Kayleigh Stanley as Calamity Jane and Ellen Lawrence as Clint Westwood. All in all a first class production that provided excellent entertainment for those in the audience and I'm sure pure enjoyment for those that took part. My congratulations to all concerned.

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**GODSPELL**

**Zenith Youth Theatre Company**

**Kingswood School, Bath**

*Director: Scott Rogers Choreographers: Julie Dallimore & Delia Lee Musical Director: Roy Page*

*19<sup>th</sup> February 2010*

**Andrew Carpenter** reports:-

This was my first visit to see Zenith Youth Theatre Company and my first impression, as soon as I entered the Kingswood Theatre, was one of great teamwork and pride. As soon as the performance started it was obvious we weren't going to be disappointed as here was a production full of energy and enthusiasm with a discipline, particularly in the chorus numbers, that would put many professional shows to shame. The beauty of performing Godspell is the ability to adapt the libretto and location and with this production director, Scott Rogers, really scored a hit by taking the show into the future with the inclusion of so much up-to-date material to make it meaningful to a young audience. The set was simple and effective, the costumes were ingenious and the sound first class. The lighting, too, was imaginative and the make-up and hair most professionally done. The orchestra provided good support and never competed with the actors on stage. Being a production based on total teamwork it would be inappropriate to single out too many individuals, however, I must congratulate Tom Corbishley in taking on the lead role of Jesus. His acting and singing was of the highest quality and his performance acted as the bedrock for this very impressive production. All in all this was a first class production brought to us by a first class company.

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