

Noda South-West Magazine Spring 2010
District 4 – Torbay & South Devon – Iain Douglas

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

“Open a New Window”

SPRING 2010

IAIN DOUGLAS reports on District 4

TWELFTH NIGHT

Dartington Playgoers

Private Gardens

Director: Sarah Welsh

July 2009

The Annual open air production at Dartington is always a local highlight, and a highlight of my calendar. Knowing that Sarah was director, I knew that we were in for an evening of high quality entertainment, and I wasn't disappointed. On a lovely rain free evening the production presented itself as a lyrical care free romantic evening, embellished with the strains of music wafting through the evening air. Illyria is a place where (as it quoted) "nothing that is so, is so". Here, Illyria was a West Indian Island which worked very well indeed. This play is full of relationships, those unrequited and those finally fulfilled and centres on Twins (Viola and Sebastian) who are shipwrecked and parted. Viola disguises herself as a man and is, later, mistaken for her brother. Clearly the audience had to throw realism into the wind at that stage, but this play is based so much on flights of fantasy that it didn't matter. Clearly and crisply directed to ensure the story (which could be confusing) was presented with clarity, and with a high quality cast, this was up to the high standard associated with Dartington's Open Air events.

NATIONAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & AWARD CEREMONY

Palace Hotel, Torquay

Saturday 25th 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

WHEN WE ARE MARRIED

Kingsbridge Amateur Theatrical Society

Village Hall, Malborough

Director: Wendy Morrall

I have missed out on the previous two summer plays from this group so was very pleased to catch this one. This J.B. Priestly classic is a staple of amateur and professional theatre and is a wonderful throwback to a forgotten age. Written in 1938, but set in 1908 Yorkshire, it requires a firm handling of the social etiquette of the time, and also the accents. Both were dealt with admirably and the accents didn't jar at all, which is often the case with this play. The set was excellent and dressed beautifully, and

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spilled over into the auditorium for the interpolated sing-along at the piano. This built up the atmosphere of celebration very well, before the bubble is temporarily burst by the revelations to the supposedly happily married couples that the evening brings. The play was very well cast, and performed, and the humour was well established. All credit to the director for handling the material at a crisp pace, but with an eye on the time and place of the action. This play went down extremely well with the audience, and I was most impressed.

Is your society's web-site linked to Noda? **SOUTH-WEST REGIONAL WEB SITE**

www.nodasw.com

SW Noda activities and "What's on" page. Plus all the reports from this magazine online.

ANYTHING GOES

TopS Musical Productions

Princess Theatre, Torquay

Director/Choreographer: Aubrey Budd

Musical Director: Robert Young

September 2009

The superior Beaumont Version of the show was very well cast indeed with each player extracting the maximum amount of humour from the script. The almost pantomime-like series of situations and gags which make this show so entertaining came at a good pace and were very clearly enjoyed by cast and audience alike. Notable in the ranks was Nicola Samuel-Stevens (Reno) who was cast against type and played a blinder. Jenny Abbot (Hope) scored the main vocal points for the evening with a lovely "Good-bye Little Dream" and Sarah Caplan was a delightful Erma. The show had pace and great style and looked absolutely magnificent costumed by *Triple C* and with the *SLX Set* and some superb lighting. Although the comedy was well played, this production was notable for some magnificent set pieces staged with superb choreography. The big numbers really made the production. For me the only drawbacks were the lack of use of the upper deck of the set (But I understand the band took up rather more space than anticipated) and an overlong overture, but these were minor drawbacks in a great show that sadly was not well supported by the public.

Noda Summer School, Loughborough University

1st - 7th August 2010 a week's concentrated study with expert tuition

Places still available: contact antonia@noda.org.uk

OLIVER !

Brixham Operatic & Dramatic Society

Brixham Theatre

Director: Isobel White

Choreographers: Isobel White & Rachel McCrory

Musical Director: Carl Smith

October 2009

Following the recent TV Find Nancy and Oliver specials, this show is having something of resurgence on the amateur circuit and proving very good box office and so it was again here. The society had gathered a great team of children who were very well drilled and disciplined with an excellent Oliver and Dodger. John Miles has played Fagin before and along with Linda Anderson as Nancy they provided a good solid core to the show. In fact I thought Linda especially good. Alex Walker was perhaps too young for Bill Sykes, but played very well, and all of these were generally well supported by the rest of the company.

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The chorus work was as lively as could be in the limited space available. This was the first “*Oliver!*” I have seen that used multi-scene changes. This show is usually presented on a composite set (with insets) and was originally designed that way to aid fast flow of action. There was an excellent main set which would have served perfectly well for all the scenes without the continual distraction of curtains and other pieces of scenery being brought on and hindering the pace. This, however, did not spoil the production and the team and cast can be well pleased for what they presented to a delighted audience.

Don't Forget

You can *only* be nominated for one of the South-West Region's prestigious awards if you invite your Regional Representative and/or the Councillor to attend your show.

Contact your Representative as early as you can.

As volunteers to the Association they have other lives away from Noda.

HUMBLE BOY

Dartington Playgoers

Barn Theatre

Director: Lesley Davis

November 2009

This play has eluded me until now, but how glad I was to acquaint myself with this wonderful offering. Alternately very witty and thought provoking, the play focuses on Felix, an astro physicist recovering from a breakdown, who is searching for a unified field theory. This is mirrored by his search at home to unify in his mind, his dead father and mother (The Queen bee). His father kept bees; hence the plays title and partial subject matter. His stay at his mother's house provokes conflict among the characters. The cast were all uniformly excellent, and how nice to see Ian Scofield back on stage as Jim (who we think is the gardener, but is actually the ghost of father). Outstanding were Peter Joscelyn and Ceni Bennett as Felix and his estranged wife. One of the programme quotes on bees says it all “You may have a vast scholarship, but the bee can give you a lesson on how to be free from torment”. I loved the play, and I found the performances most impressive under the direction of Lesley, who I know much prefers the rehearsal process to the performance end result.

18th July 2010

SOUTH-WEST REGIONAL AGM & AWARD CEREMONY

Holiday Inn, Taunton 10:45 a.m.

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

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THE BOYFRIEND Paignton Operatic & Dramatic Society The Palace Theatre

Director: Richard Bearn *Choreographer: Sarah Roche* *Musical Director: Carl Smith*

November 2009

This was Richard's first musical as a director, and he can be well pleased with the delightful results of his, Sarah and Carl's work. The predominantly young cast gave life and vitality to their roles and clearly took on board the director's instruction to treat the piece just exactly for what it is (and which is often overlooked), a gentle mickey take on the 1920's. Some experienced older players took on the "adult" roles and provided a good foil for the younger players. The young men made a good looking line-up and thus believable love interests for the equally good looking young ladies of Madame Dubonnet's School. They all gave strong performances and there is clearly much talent for the future with Fredrika Wright (Polly), Alex Walker (Tony) and Alex Mendez (Bobby) particularly notable, although Alex Walker does need to learn to wear a costume properly and not look so untidy on stage. A small chorus backed with enthusiasm and the 5 piece band supported very well indeed. With excellent set and costumes, this was a lovely nostalgic evening, but once again, another Torbay Society suffered from poor houses this season. Worrying !!

Thank you to all of you who promptly paid your 2010 subscriptions

If you haven't got around to settling your membership with Peterborough.

Please remind your Treasurer for prompt payment.

Unpaid subscriptions by 31st March will lead to your membership lapsing.

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Paignton Pantomime Productions The Palace Theatre

Director: Iain Douglas *Choreographers: Elaine Johnson and Amanda Coote*

2nd January 2010

Musical Director: John Amery

Lynne Caygill reports:-

This pantomime had good pace from the start, although it did have a first half that was just that little too long. Pantomime is family entertainment and children do get fidgety. However, there was much to keep the audience entertained and lots of audience participation, which was enjoyed by the children. Simple Simon built up a fabulous rapport with the audience, his performance had tremendous energy and he was loved by all. Jack gave a vibrant performance with some excellent singing and Piccalilli, the Witch, was the one we loved to hate. Fairy Sugardust was a lovely contrast to Piccalilli, but needed to slow her dialogue down as it was not always very clear. I felt the Bakery Scene could have been cut from the first half, some of the action was in "bad taste" especially when the rest of the pantomime was very definitely aimed at children. The costumes were excellent. They were bright and colourful and sparkled against some very good scenery. The choreography was energetic and well rehearsed with "The Ugly Bug Ball" performed by the young dancers a particular highlight. The balance was good between the singing and the band and it was fun to see the band joining in with the action. Some brilliant props had been created by the Gilderthorp team and they must be given full marks for the creation of Buttermilk the Cow, who more than stole the show whenever on stage. The pantomime ended with a glamorous last golden scene and good fun was had by all.

ROBINSON CRUSOE

Totnes Operatic & Dramatic Society

Civic Hall, Totnes

Director: John Parker *Choreographer: Bebe Sanders* *Musical Director: Jude Cummins*

January 2010

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If there is one thing that Totnes do well with their pantomimes, it is often to come up with a tale that is both imaginative and bizarre, and contains some suitably way out characters. I think only in Totnes could they get away with a pantomime such as this one. It certainly wouldn't work down the road in Torbay! The Director provided his own script, written and first performed in 1995. The motley band of characters included such wonderfully named Lady Gertrude Combayne-Arvista, Prof. Legrande Fromage, Princesses Mercedes, Portia and Skoda, Captain Smoked Herryng and bizarrely, but entertainingly, a kangaroo (that is actually the heroine in disguise - don't ask !) The cast played it for all it was worth in its glorious silliness and the audience greatly enjoyed it. It faltered occasionally, but was well drilled and the musical numbers were very well supported by the usual excellent pit band. I have to admit it wasn't really my cup of tea as pantomimes go, but it was well drilled and directed and I did like the bizarre quirky element.

ALI BABA & the FORTY THIEVES

Newton Abbot Musical Comedy Society

Alexandra Theatre, Newton Abbot

Director: Darren Parr Choreographer: Claire Robinson Musical Director: Joanna Morris

January 2010

This Alan Frayn script gives a nice bounce to a story that at some points bears a striking similarity to "Aladdin". It took a short while to come to life thanks to a quiet audience, who were distracted by an annoying crying child, but once the indomitable Eddie Campaigne took the stage (Fatima Fandango) they were sufficiently warmed up. Eddie joked and ad-libbed his way through the story with great effect. There were stand out performances from Claire Shakesheave (Mustafa Screwloose) (whatever Claire is on, I want some of it!), Mike Chenery (Asbad), Charlotte Gilmartin (Grabbit) and Matt Tucker (Bashim), who all portrayed lovely bizarre quirky characters, and understood the prime panto requirement for fast, lively and visual presentation. However, all principals were strong and it was nice to see Becky Forward and Louise Bennett in major roles and Kate Parr as the baddie for a change. Claire Robinson staged some excellent routines and the big numbers worked well. Choice of music numbers was good and well rendered by the pit band. Attractive costumes and scenery ensured that the visual side of the show was served well. Darren's direction ensured a fast pace overall, with some affective comedy and an entertaining slapstick scene, all of which kept the audience amused until the final curtain.

SOUTH-WEST REGIONAL WEB SITE www.nodasw.com

Contact our membership secretary: nicklawrence@hotmail.com to register your web-site & email addresses

Information about Noda SW, what's on page and reports from this magazine online

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