

## Dates for your Diary

- Chelmsford Young Generation AMS  
WIZARD OF OZ  
28th April - 3rd May 1997  
Civic Theatre, Chelmsford  
Box Office: (01245) 251886
- Clacton AOS  
HALF A SIXPENCE  
13th-17th May 1997  
Princess Theatre, Clacton  
Mrs Marion Stanton (01255) 436764
- Sudbury LOS  
CAROUSEL  
14th, and 16th-21st June 1997  
Quay Theatre, Sudbury  
Mrs Sue Titcombe (01787) 378573 (evenings)
- Springers AODS  
KISS ME, KATE  
wk beginning 23rd June 1997  
Civic Theatre, Chelmsford  
Box office: (01245) 495110
- South Anglia Savoy Players  
PATIENCE  
Public Hall, Witham Monday 28th July only  
Cliffs Pavilion, Southend Tuesday 29th July only  
Derek Collins (01376) 515107
- CO2 (Colchester Operatic youth group)  
THE WIZ  
August 1997 venue TBA  
David Moye (01206) 571348
- Braintree & Bocking Music Society  
42nd STREET  
13th-18th October 1997  
The Institute, Braintree  
Mrs Diane Long (01376) 330351
- Witham Operatic Society  
PIRATES OF PENZANCE  
20th-25th October 1997  
Public Hall, Witham
- Colchester OS  
BARNUM  
November 1997  
Charter Hall, Leisure Centre, Colchester  
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*Presents*

# ORPHEUS *in the* Underworld

Witham Public Hall  
Monday 21st - Saturday  
26th April 1997





## PREVIOUS PRODUCTIONS OF THE SOCIETY

1922 HMS Pinafore	1955 Rose Marie	1972 The Merry Widow	1985 Showboat
1923 The Pirates of Penzance	1956 Tulip Time	The Gondoliers	La Vie Parisienne
1924 Ruddigore	1957 The White Horse Inn	1973 Carousel	Yeomen of the Guard
1925 Patience	1958 The Gipsy Princess	Iolanthe	The Sound of Music
1926 Yeomen of the Guard	1959 The Merry Widow	1974 The Pajama Game	1987 The Merry Widow
1927 Dorothy	1960 Bless the Bride	The Yeomen of the Guard	Trial by Jury &
1928 Les Cloches de Corneville	1961 The Boy Friend	1975 Pink Champagne	HMS Pinafore
1929 Mikado	1962 Grab Me a Gondola	Patience	1988 Kismet
1930 The Gondoliers	1963 The Quaker Girl	1976 South Pacific	Half a Sixpence
1931 Falca	1964 The New Moon	Ruddigore	1989 Fiddler on the Roof
1932 HMS Pinafore	Mikado	1977 Guys & Dolls	The Gondoliers
1933 Merrie England	1965 The Maid of the Mountains	Utopia Ltd	1990 Die Fledermaus
1934 Tom Jones	The Pirates of Penzance	1978 The White Horse Inn	The King and I
1935 The Geisha	1966 Gypsy Love	Mikado	1991 Carousel
1936 Dorothy	HMS Pinafore	1979 Brigadoon	Patience
1937 The Maid of the Mountains	1967 Call Me Madam	Princess Ida	1992 Annie Get Your Gun
1938 The Street Singer	Iolanthe	1980 Orpheus in the Underworld	Bless the Bride
1939 Goodnight Vienna	1968 The Desert Song	Iolanthe	1993 Brigadoon
1947 Miss Hook of Holland	Patience	1981 Summer Song	Ruddigore
1948 Maritza	1969 Rose Marie	The Quaker Girl	1994 My Fair Lady
1949 Katinka	Mikado	1982 The Desert Song	South Pacific
1950 The Lilac Domino	1970 Free As Air	Cox & Box & The Sorcerer	1995 Kiss Me, Kate
1951 Rio Rita	The Pirates of Penzance	1983 Oklahoma!	Oliver!
1952 Wild Violets	1971 Oklahoma!	The Pirates of Penzance	1996 Anything Goes
1953 Magyar Melody	Trial by Jury &	1984 My Fair Lady	Guys & Dolls
1954 Carissima	HMS Pinafore	Free As Air	

## WITHAM AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY

President: N.H.O. Clough Esq.

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For Further details about becoming a Vice President, please contact our Hon. Membership Secretary.

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Publicity by M. Dunion Esq.	

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# Witham Amateur Operatic Society

proudly presents



# ORPHEUS *in the* Underworld

Witham Public Hall  
Monday 21st - Saturday  
26th April 1997

Comic operetta in Three Acts from the original by  
HECTOR CREMIEUX AND LUDOVIC HALEVY

New book & lyrics by  
PHIL PARK

Music by JAQUES OFFENBACH  
Music adapted and arranged by  
RONALD HANMER

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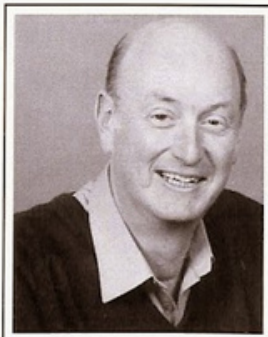


WITHAM AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY was inaugurated in 1921, is a registered charity (number 265029), and is affiliated to the National Operatic & Dramatic Association (NODA).





A  
Message  
from the  
President



"Welcome to an experience of alternative Greek Mythology.

The legend of Orpheus and Eurydice has been somewhat modified and "not as Homer once intended". This makes for an operetta of amusement and humour, accompanied by Offenbach's classic and lively music, and rounded off with the statutory CAN CAN GALOP.

Thank you for supporting us once again. We wish you an enjoyable evening's entertainment".

*Nicholas Clough*  
Nicholas Clough (President)

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The Producer - Eddie McKay



Eddie received her drama training at the Guildhall and has worked mainly with groups in London and Essex. She has directed a variety of productions with adults and young people including straight plays, musicals and operas.

Last year she directed *Love's Labour Lost* in the open air in Colchester for the Priory Players, and *Orrible Murders* and *Crippen*, for Troupe. These performances should have been in the Studio at the Mercury Theatre, but had to be rerouted due to the fire!

This is her fourth production for Witham Operatic Society, the last one being *Kiss Me, Kate* which she enjoyed very much. She also works with WOW and directed their inaugural production *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*. In fact, her next musical is *Annie* in February 1998 with this youth group. She has just acquired a new puppy which is in training for the auditions!

She is also chairman of Theatre Arts Action, an umbrella organisation of amateur drama groups in Colchester, dedicated to providing a Performing Space for amateurs in the Colchester area.

The Musical Director - John James



John James was our Musical Director for *The Sound of Music* (1986), *The Merry Widow*, and *Trial/Pinafore* (1987), and we warmly welcome him back as our MD for *Orpheus in the Underworld*, and our autumn show *Pirates of Penzance*.

John was lured away from a job at Sedgewicks to return to South Africa as Principal Horn Player in the new "National Orchestra". To say John was kept busy in South Africa would be something of an understatement. In three years he took part in ten concertos, and was eventually offered some conducting work and a couple of Production recording sessions with the orchestra. In his second year he wrote an orchestral arrangement for a big Symphonic Pops concert, which was a huge success mainly because it included a show-stopping arrangement of Freddie Mercury's "Barcelona". Leading on from that he became involved in the Durban series "Philharmonic Rock" and wrote over 30 arrangements for Natal Performing Arts Council. Eventually he was asked to act as Assistant Musical Director for *Camelot* (1989) and *My Fair Lady* (1990). This involved shadowing the MD and then taking over the show once press night was over, and running it to the end of the season.

John returned to UK to take up a job with Lammermuir Pipe Organs, and later with Walkers of East Anglia, and now works as a piano repairer and tuner. Apart from being our MD he has also managed to find time to found the Sudbury and District Symphony Orchestra.

The Assistant Director - Lavinia Farmer



Lavinia has appeared in and choreographed many of Braintree and Bocking Musical Society's shows, a recent appearance being as Mrs Mullins in the society's production of *Carousel*. She also enjoys concert work and Old Time Music Halls.

Lavinia has also featured strongly in the stagework of a few recent WAOS shows. She choreographed *My Fair Lady* (1994), and *Kiss Me, Kate* (1995). She not only choreographed *Guys & Dolls* (1996), but also took on the role of Assistant Director in that show. For *Orpheus in the Underworld*, she has been whipping us all up into a bacchanalian frenzy for one of the highlights of the show, the famous "Can-Can" galop.

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## Characters

Eurydice	wife of Orpheus	Valerie Ditchman
Calliope	Muse of Epic Poetry, & Orpheus' mum	Janet Wash
Cupid	god of love	Marea Irving
Venus	goddess of beauty, otherwise 'armless	Helene Jones
Diana	goddess of hunting and stag nights	Sue Siddalls
Juno	Mrs Jupiter	Sandra Moorhouse
Orpheus	professor of music	Paul Chittleborough
Pluto	King of Hades (and Aristaeus)	Howard Brooks
Jupiter	King of the gods	Nicholas Clough
Mars	god of war	Tom Whelan
Mercury	messenger of the gods	Michael Dunion
Bacchus	god of wine bars	Jonathan Baron
Vulcan	god of fire, and Mr Venus	Peter McKay
Styx	servant of Pluto	Grahame Jones
Icarus	balloon pilot	Stewart Adkins

## Nymphs, Shepherds, Gods, Goddesses, Attendants, Revellers, Pupils, etc.

Kathryn Adkins, Jonathan Baron, Caron Bradbury, Pat Briggs, Muriel Chambers, Rosemary Chaplin, William Chaplin, Tim Clarke, Julie Edwards, Alf Farmer, Helen Fox, Natalie Hawkes, Judy Henderson, Richard Herring, Grahame Borthwick Jones, Peter McKay, Anne Marsden, Dave Morgan, Patsy Page, Julia Reed, Joyce Ryder, Ann Sheppard, Tim Sheppard, Edna Starling, Bobbie Tyler, Tom Whelan, Darren White, Anne Wilson, Sarah Wilson.

## Dancers

Kathryn Adkins, Caron Bradbury, Anne Dobinson, Natalie Hawkes, Elisabeth Ladd, Sue Rogers

## Synopsis of Scenes and Musical Numbers

### OVERTURE

#### ACT ONE *A landscape near Thebes*

The Evening Shadows	Chorus with Calliope
A Nymph in Love	Eurydice
Entrance of Orpheus	
The Violin Duet	Eurydice and Orpheus
A Shepherd Am I	Pluto, as Aristaeus, and Girls
Mortals Below, Gods Up Above	Eurydice, Pluto, with Chorus
Invocation	Eurydice
The Awakening	
Pluto Exit	
Finale Act 1	Calliope, Orpheus, and Chorus

**Interval - 15 minutes**

#### ACT TWO *Mount Olympus*

Opening Act Two	
Lament for Actaeon	Diana, Venus, Jupiter, Chorus
Balloon Song	Calliope, Orpheus and Icarus
Nothing We Can Do	Juno, Pluto and Jupiter
To Arms	Ensemble
Ha-Ha-Ha!	Cupid, Diana, Venus, Mars, Chorus
Entr'Acte	

**Interval - 15 minutes**

#### ACT THREE

##### SCENE 3: *Pluto's Den*

Sorry I Came	Eurydice
I Was a King	Styx
Cherchez La Femme	Pluto, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, Styx
The Fly Duet	Eurydice and Jupiter

##### SCENE 2: *Hades*

The Hades Chorus	Chorus, Venus, Cupid
Hymn to Bacchus	Eurydice and Chorus
Reprise: Mortals Below	Eurydice, Pluto, Jupiter, Chorus
Minuet	Jupiter, Pluto, Ensemble
Galop	Ensemble
Entrance of Orpheus	
Finale Act Three	Full Company
Curtain Call	
Playout	

## Production Credits

<b>Director:</b>	Eddie McKay
<b>Choreographer:</b>	Lavinia Farmer
<b>Stage Manager:</b> <i>assisted by:</i>	Graham Green David Hunt Keith Radley Mark Tinworth Jim Crimmins Richard Thornelow Alex James
<b>Scenery:</b>	Paul Lazell (Scenery)
<b>Lighting:</b> <i>assisted by:</i>	Rhuddian Davies Glen Cousins
<b>Lighting equip:</b>	Braintree District Arts Council, Richard Heinz Electrics, Colchester Theatre Arts Action.
<b>Properties Manger:</b> <i>assisted by:</i>	Janice Hawkes Kate Dawson Julie Cockell Angie Crimmins Laura Furnival Nathalie Cudlip Fitz Smith Charlotte Clough
<b>Transport:</b>	Tim Sheppard
<b>Wardrobe by:</b> <i>assisted by:</i>	Sue Rogers Julia Dunion Pat Ladd
<b>Costume Hire:</b>	The Costume Store (Janet Ager & Tony Brett)
<b>Make-up &amp; wigs:</b>	Patsy Page
<b>Prompt:</b>	Cynthia Draper
<b>Production Secretary:</b>	Lavinia Farmer
<b>Box Office Manger:</b>	Tom Whelan
<b>Front of House Manager:</b> <i>assisted by:</i>	Dennis Page Lydia Clough
<b>Foyer Display:</b>	Peter McKay
<b>Bar Manager:</b>	Ron Howe
<b>Flowers by:</b>	Michelle
<b>Front of House Manager:</b> <i>programme photography:</i>	Peter McKay & Central Photography, Witham
<b>Programme Cover &amp; Posters Artwork:</b>	Mick Hemstedt
<b>Programme by:</b>	Howard Brooks

## Orchestral Credits:

<b>Musical Director &amp; Conductor:</b>	John James
<b>Violins</b>	Claire Simmons (Leader) Bryony Rees, Hannah Strange, Caroline Strange
<b>Viola</b>	Roger Strange Hannah Strange Jonathan Shave
<b>Cello</b>	Steve Chamberlain Jessica Fox
<b>Bass</b>	Lesley Harwood - Ellis
<b>Flute</b>	Nigel Morgan
<b>Clarinets</b>	Paul Wendell Christine Wendell,
<b>Trumpets</b>	Martin Phillips Glyn Lewis
<b>Trombones</b>	Steve Edmonds
<b>Drums</b>	Peter Clark
<b>Rehearsal accompanists:</b>	Ruth Le Poidevin Les Silverman

## PHOTOGRAPHY and RECORDING

**PLEASE NOTE:**  
the taking of photographs  
and/or the recording of  
this performance on film,  
video tape, audio tape or  
any other recording medium  
*is strictly prohibited.*



## The Story

If you come to this production with an in-depth knowledge of Greek mythology, kindly leave it at the door - you won't be needing it tonight! As this hilarious adaptation runs riot across the classical landscape of Greece, Heaven (Mount Olympus) and Hell (Hades) you will probably recognise some of the principal characters of ancient mythology, and maybe a hint of Greek legend and mythology here and there - but only just. Our hero Orpheus, who in the original legend sang and played his lyre so beautifully that all the animals came to listen (and even the trees and bushes pulled up their roots to join in the audience) appears as a violin teacher with harmonically challenged pupils. If you paid attention at school you will probably recognise the King of the Gods Zeus (Jupiter), Goddess of Beauty (Venus), and Cupid, her mischievous offspring. Those of you who can answer all the questions on Mastermind will probably recognise Pluto (King of the Underworld), Mars (god of war and chocolate) and Mercury (messenger of the gods, and god of telephones). If the names Eurydice, Diana, Juno, Styx and Icarus don't twang your synapses, rest assured, for this adaptation of the Orpheus and Eurydice legend only winks occasionally at serious mythology, while it smiles at comic operetta, beams at farce, and laughs out loud at riotous bacchanalian frenzy (dictionaries available front of house). The preface to the libretto sets the position out very clearly: "*PERIOD. The action of the operetta takes place, without any regard for credibility, in unspecified ANCIENT TIMES*". Now, that's my kind of mythology!

So much for the prologue, now on with the story. The *first act* is set in a Landscape near Thebes (gazetteer available front of house). In the best mythological tradition, Calliope (Orpheus' mum) gives us the background to the plot - her son and his wife, the stunning Eurydice, don't exactly hit it off, as it were. On comes Eurydice to explain to us (*A Nymph in Love*) that she is having an Olympian affair with one Aristaeus, a simple shepherd (or so she thinks!). Hubby Orpheus arrives, and the two squabble - she hates his violin playing, and just to make her suffer, Orpheus insists on playing his latest symphony (*Violin Duet*). This is the tune that makes the knowledgeable musicians sit up and say "Ah, Gluck", or something like that. Anyway, Orpheus passes on a message from the Oracle at Delphi (a sort of Grecian Mystic Meg) that danger lurks underfoot in the cornfield (it's actually a snake in the grass, but we don't know that yet). Nor are we supposed to guess quite yet that this is all part of a cunning plan to allow Eurydice to be carried off by Aristaeus, so that Orpheus can pursue his adored Amaryliss. Aristaeus then arrives, and reveals to Eurydice that (surprise, surprise) he is not a shepherd, but is Pluto, King of Hades, in disguise (*A Shepherd Am I*). Eurydice is then obligingly bitten by the snake in the cornfield (what a load of cobras), thinks she is dying (she can't die yet, it's only Act 1), and is magically whisked off by Pluto to the Underworld. Enter Orpheus to find Eurydice gone, to his evident (but feigned) surprise. So far, everything has gone right for the Orpheus/Pluto plan. But then Mum (Calliope) turns up and declares that far from being pleased that the marriage from Hell is now over, it is a great insult that Pluto should carry off her daughter-in-law, and they must all go to Mount Olympus to complain to Jupiter about Pluto's behaviour, and claim back Eurydice. The thing about Calliope is that if she says you must go to Mount Olympus, that's precisely what you do, so she and her son set off to Heaven in a balloon (*Balloon Song*: this scene sponsored by Virgin Atlantic) piloted by one Icarus (a high-flyer).

And so *Act 2* opens on Mount Olympus (Heaven) with all the gods and goddesses squabbling amongst themselves and complaining about the constant diet of ambrosia and nectar. Diana is particularly upset about Jupiter changing her boyfriend into a stag (there's no pleasing some people), when Mercury arrives hot-foot to tell the assembled deities that gossip isn't what it used to be, and the only decent scandal is that one of the gods (in disguise) has carried off an earthwoman named Eurydice. It doesn't take long for them to work out which god it was, and Mercury is sent down to Hades to fetch Pluto back to explain himself (passing the balloon carrying Orpheus, Icarus and Calliope up to Olympus, and passing it again on the return journey, with Pluto in tow). On arrival, Pluto is just denying all knowledge of the accusations, when in burst the assembled deities in uproar (*To Arms!*), complaining of boredom and ambrosia (again! Haven't they heard of 57 varieties?), and of being treated like children by papa Jupiter. The Old Man protests that he is the best of husbands and the kindest of fathers, at which the company delight in reminding him that he has seduced unsuspecting mortals disguised as swans, bulls etc. (*Ha-Ha-Ha*). Things are beginning to get out of hand, when the imminent arrival of Calliope and Orpheus brings the gods to their senses, and they decide to present a united front, to keep up appearances. Predictably, Orpheus is forced to identify his former conspirator Pluto as the culprit, and Calliope insists that Pluto does the honourable thing (some chance), and hand Eurydice back to Orpheus. Jupiter agrees, issues a decree to that effect, and announces that he will accompany Pluto back to Hades, to make sure he obeys. Of course, all the chorus must go to the Underworld too, otherwise there would be hardly anybody in the next Act.

*Act 3. Welcome to your worst nightmare.* This is hell, also called Hades, abode of Pluto. Curtain up to reveal Eurydice, who complains of being ignored by Pluto (*Sorry I Came*), especially as the only company she has is the old weirdo Styx, who insists on telling her what he got up to when he was alive (*I was a King*). Pluto arrives just in time to make sure Styx still has Eurydice under lock and key (he doesn't want the old lecher Jupiter to get his hands on her), Jupiter and an advanced party of gods arrive soon after. The men quickly realise the great universal truth that if they are in trouble, it will be a woman's fault (*Cherchez la Femme*), after which Pluto and Styx depart to prepare the forthcoming revels, and Jupiter is left alone. This man is not King of the Gods for nothing, and he soon works out that Pluto must have concealed Eurydice behind *that* door. Enter Cupid, who unlocks the door for him (Love Laughs at locksmiths!) and provides Jupiter with a disguise which will enable him to woo and grope Eurydice disguised as a bluebottle (having already used up swans, bulls, etc.). Now its time for some serious partying, and the *Hades Chorus* sings drunken praise to Pluto. It is decided that Eurydice must sing something, so she offers a *Hymn to Bacchus*. In vino veritas, as they say (Latin dictionary available front of house) and the two rivals for her affections start to realise that it might not all be going according to their plans. Before things get out of hand, Pluto announces that it is time for a change of tone, and just to prove how civilised they are, they will dance a *Minuet* (actually a delightful one). Time for a serious note here. All good stories work at several levels, and the original Orpheus of 1858 was no different. On the face of it the show is a reflection of the radiant gaiety of contemporary Paris, but underneath lies a stinging satire - one moment everyone pretends how civilised they are, and the next it's all drunken orgies! Here endeth the lesson, and back to the plot. In contrast to the refined Minuet, Pluto's trained troupe of tipsy terpsichoreans give Jupiter and company the famous and exhausting *Can Can* galop (oxygen available front of house). Just to spoil the fun, Calliope and Orpheus then arrive, and Calliope insists that Jupiter honour his promise and hand over Eurydice to Orpheus. Will that happen? You cannot be serious!...this is a Hammer and Park adaptation, so wait and see for yourselves!

## The Composer

Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880) was a small eccentric-looking man with thin Jewish features, dandy whiskers and a pince-nez. He had a bird-like quality about him - a bright chirpy zest for living - and he personally provided much of the humour in his works to his librettists. He was also a compulsive worker, forever driving librettists into a fever of activity. All of this was expressed in the liveliest examples of his music. Yet underneath his lively exterior he was by nature a romantic personality, and woven into his music are characteristically tender and lyrical melodies and songs.

Though of Jewish German origin, Offenbach became a naturalised Frenchman, but he never mastered the French language. His musical ancestry was in the music hall song, the opera comique, and possibly in Rossini and Mozart. In fact it was Rossini who summed him up best and most flatteringly when he called Offenbach "the Mozart of the Champs Elysees".

Offenbach's grandfather Juda Eberst had settled in Offenbach-am-Main (now a suburb of Frankfurt), and his son Isaac, who inherited his father's musical talents, set out on a precarious life as an itinerant singer and violinist. Eventually he settled in Deutz (Cologne), and following his nickname "Der Offenbacher", he adopted the name "Offenbach", feeling it had more of a musical ring than Eberst. He married Marianne Rindskopf in 1805 and raised a large family of ten, our Jakob (Jacques) being the seventh. It soon became evident that the young Jakob was musically gifted, and at the age of fourteen he was sent to Paris to audition (successfully) at the famous Paris Conservatoire. However, he found the teaching too dull for words, so he departed after a year, lived on his wits as a cellist, and eventually obtained a post at the Opera-Comique (surely directed there by the muse of Comic Opera, who knew precisely what he should be doing!). It was at the Opera Comique that he really learnt the trade, helped on his way by lessons in composition from Fromental Halevy, writing incidental music, and contributing pieces by himself to concert repertoires.

Jacques fell in love with a charming girl named Herminie d'Alcain, but her father wanted tangible proof of his ability to prevent his daughter from starving, so he began to organise concerts in Paris, and bring in more of his own work. He arranged tours in France and Germany, and in 1844 in London, playing at Her Majesty's Theatre, and before Queen Victoria and Albert. He returned from London a wealthy young man, and was allowed to marry his beloved Herminie.

The next few years were musically frustrating, for example a commissioned operetta had to be cancelled because of the 1848 revolution, and he had to return to Cologne and become Jakob Eberst again for political reasons. When things quietened down again, he returned to Paris in 1850 (as Jacques) and was offered the job of Director of the Comedie Francaise, where he revitalised the theatre and revived its fortunes. He was commissioned to write an operetta with the curious title of *Oyayae* (1855), whose success encouraged him to think of more ambitious projects. He leased a tiny theatre in the Champs-Elysees, and called it Les Bouffes-Parisiens. From this time dates his fruitful collaboration with the young writer Ludovic Halevy, and a string of small productions which built his reputation, and a new house. It was already possible to discern Offenbach's style of writing in the early works - blends of sentimental waltzes and vivacious can-cans.

He moved from his post at the Comedie Francaise, and took up serious music writing. This was his golden period - *Orfee aux Enfers* (Orpheus, 1858), *La Belle Helene* (Beautiful Helen 1864), *Barbe-Bleue* (Bluebeard) and *La Vie Parisienne* (Parisian Life, 1866), and his greatest international hit *La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein* (1867). However *La Perichole* (1868) was not a success because it was not considered scandalous enough - certainly not in the way *Orpheus* and *Helen* mocked classical antiquity and contemporary Paris at one and the same time. The God Mars again interrupted his life, and the Franco-Prussian War seems to have cut off his flow of inspiration in 1870 and 1871. He retreated from Paris, and his work, declared "Prussian" by the new republic, suddenly fell from grace. This marked a decline in his fortunes, and his eventual bankruptcy forced him to accept an invitation to the World Fair in Philadelphia. The Americans obviously expected a wicked figure who would dance can-cans on the platform, instead he cut a rather serious and forlorn figure. However, his concerts were a success, and he returned to Paris fired with an enthusiasm to write a serious Grand Opera, and from 1877 he was working on the theme of the fantastic *Tales of Hoffmann*. He played the score through to the cast in September 1880, but tragically died two days later, before he could see it performed. An old friend called on him and was told by the porter "Monsieur Offenbach died without knowing it. He will be surprised when he finds out!".

## Are you interested in joining the Society?

We are always looking out for new acting/singing members. If you would like to join us, please come to our first *Pirates* rehearsal at Spring Lodge Community Centre, Chipping Hill on Wednesday 7th May at 7.30pm, or contact our secretary Anne Marsden on (01376) 519629 for more details.

## Or are you young enough to be a WOW?

Witham Operatic Workshop (WOW) was formed in 1995 as a junior section of WAOS, with the long term aim of instructing members in all aspects of musical theatre. WOW has already staged *Joseph and West Side Story*, and both shows were well-received by audiences and critics alike. *Annie* is planned for February of next year, as well as other events in the autumn.

WOW has been fortunate to gather together many talented young people, who, apart from gaining useful experience in the shows, have taken part in various master-classes and a variety of social events, meeting new friends and forging new relationships in the process. Members of WOW automatically become members of WAOS at the age of sixteen, and can join the senior group if they so desire. If you would like to join WOW (and remember you must be 11 to 18 yrs old inclusive) please contact Angie Crimmins on (01376) 520473.

Nicholas Clough

## An Orpheus Quiz

- 1 Which Hammer and Park adaptations of famous operettas have WAOS have performed in recent years?
- 2 What nationality was Jacques Offenbach?
- 3 The co-writer of the original Orpheus libretto is the virtually unknown Ludovic Halevy, but he was also co-writer of other famous shows. Which?
- 4 Now for the really difficult questions. Lots of the character names in Orpheus are actually the Latin (Roman) versions. Give the correct Greek name of Juno, Diana, Mercury, Vulcan.
- 5 Offenbach wrote the very funny and popular "Policemen's Duet". Which show is it from?
- 6 Can you spot the connection between Cole Porter and Offenbach?
- 7 What was Offenbach's amusing nickname?

(Answers on page 14)



The 1997 Cast

Photo: Peter

There are several members of the 1980 cast who feature in the 1997 show, despite being plunged in Ambrosia and sprinkled with Nectar. There's no putting some people off, is there?, They are Judy Henderson, Nicholas Clough and Patsy Page (Pluto and Eurydice in 1980), Helene Jones (Venus in both shows) and (away when the school photo was taken), Howard Brooks (Icarus in 1980). A very young Marea Irving (Cupid) played the same part in 1968



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## Peter Charters (1922-1996)

It was with sadness that we learnt of the recent death of Peter Charters. Peter joined the Society in 1975 and played principal roles for us including Arvide Abernathy in *Guys & Dolls* (1977), The Emperor in *White Horse Inn*, and the title role in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* (both 1978).

Peter was born in Edinburgh and was educated at King's College School, Birmingham. He started singing in his early teens and entered many schools' singing festivals with great success. He joined the R.A.F in 1942, during the Second World War, and was demobbed after three years. In 1947 he was invited to join the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company where he met his future wife Carol Fane, who at that time was understudying the major contralto roles. Peter went on to play minor principal roles including *1st Yeoman*, in *Yeomen of the Guard*. Peter and Carol left the company in 1951 and were married in Reigate. Their son, Simon, was born in 1952. They continued to perform at Concert Parties and gave Gilbert and Sullivan recitals for many years in the Brighton and Hayward's Heath areas, and in many parts of Surrey. In 1959 they moved briefly to Cheltenham and in 1960 Peter re-enlisted in the R.A.F., for three years, in Air Traffic Control, based in Germany. There he continued to display his performing talents, appearing as the Duke of Plaza Toro in *The Gondoliers*, and the Lord Chancellor in *Iolanthe*. In 1964, he and Carol returned to Cheltenham, and during the next twelve years Peter won many awards in the Cheltenham Music Festival, gave weekly concerts at local hotels with the Cheltenham Opera Group, and performed secular and classical concerts with Felicity Lot. In 1976 they returned to Carol's birthplace, Witham, and for a year Peter entertained at St. Martin's Lane in London at the Elizabethan Rooms, portraying King Henry the Eighth.

Following his time with WAOS, he played many principal roles for The Carlow Players until fairly recently. For many years, he performed with a concert party which originated from the Operatic Society, and was actively involved from the mid-Eighties until December last year. Peter was so dedicated to his singing, which he enjoyed above all else, that he used to practice every day for at least an hour right up to the day before he died. Those who knew him will miss his good company and cheerful countenance. He was a man without malice who always had time for other people.

We would like to wish Carol every happiness when she emigrates to New Zealand later this year to live with her son.

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