

Welcome to the Autumn 2024 edition of the WAOS Newsletter.

In this edition we look forward to our next shows *Anything Goes* and *White Christmas*. We also look at *Salad Days* and the financial context of WAOS' show history. Plus the usual reminders on dates and WAOS committee details.

The Historical and Social Backdrop to *Anything Goes*

This musical by Cole Porter that debuted in 1934, is set against the backdrop of the Great Depression and reflects the social dynamics and cultural shifts of the early 20th century. Here are some key elements of its social history and topical references:

Historical Context

1. **The Great Depression:** The musical was written during the economic turmoil of the 1930s. The carefree attitude of the characters and the notion of escaping to a luxury cruise can be seen as a response to the economic hardships faced by many Americans at the time.
2. **Prohibition:** The story takes place on a transatlantic ocean liner, where alcohol is still illegal due to Prohibition (which lasted until 1933). The characters' attempts to smuggle alcohol and the frequent references to drinking highlight the tensions and contradictions of this era.
3. **Changing Social Norms:** The 1920s and 1930s saw significant shifts in social attitudes, especially regarding gender roles and sexuality. The character of Reno Sweeney, a brassy nightclub singer, embodies the new, liberated woman of the era, challenging traditional expectations.

Topical References in Dialogue and Music

1. **Cultural References:** The musical includes numerous references to contemporary celebrities, events, and cultural icons, reflecting the popular culture of the time. For example, characters mention figures like "The Duke," alluding to Duke Ellington and the jazz scene.
2. **Class and Society:** The interactions between the upper and lower classes aboard the ship serve as a commentary on social stratification. The humour often arises from misunderstandings and romantic entanglements across class lines, echoing the social mobility discussions of the era.
3. **Romantic Escapism:** The plot revolves around romantic entanglements and misunderstandings, providing an escapist narrative that resonates with audiences looking to forget their troubles. The famous song "Anything Goes" emphasizes a carefree attitude, suggesting that traditional morals can be set aside for love and enjoyment.
4. **LGBTQ+ Subtext:** While not overtly discussed, there are elements in the musical that hint at fluid gender roles and relationships, reflecting a growing acceptance of diverse identities even during a time of more rigid social norms.

Overall Themes

Anything Goes ultimately embodies a spirit of optimism and escapism, capturing the desire to break free from societal constraints. The musical's witty lyrics and lively score celebrate the idea that, in a world full of challenges, love and laughter can prevail. The combination of its humour, catchy tunes, and sharp social commentary makes it a quintessential reflection of its time.

Salad Days – Revival of an oldie but a goodie!

It was never going to be an easy task to create awareness of and desire to see an older musical that is no longer that well known. However, the decision was made to give one of our regular and loyal members, Emma Loring, an opportunity to direct her first show at WAOS, after several shows as assistant to the director. The committee considers this as part of its role, to give people a chance to prove themselves and develop their skills. Let's admit it, everyone has to start somewhere. *Salad Days* was a show Emma had been in and one that she knew well. Some committee members knew the show and agreed it was worth the risk, especially since one in two shows historically lose money for WAOS and experience has shown that trying to choose a show on the basis of financial appeal is a mug's game. *Salad Days* was a show which would be relatively cheap to produce with a band of just three instruments and the ability to costume most of it from our own store.

The first challenge was to cast the show. At the start of the pre-audition period for this show we had just ten regular members ready to take part; Trevor had his arm twisted and joined in, taking us to eleven. But the production team were wondering how such a small group, especially with so few men, could possibly fill all the necessary roles. Although the original professional cast consisted of just eleven people, we must assume that they were selected from a much wider panel of auditionees. WAOS didn't have that luxury on this occasion. However, by the time of the auditions we had attracted three new members and the possibility of a fourth if the suggested role would work for her. In the latter case we refer to Avalon Lawton, Constance's daughter, who was an inspired choice to play Troppo, a mute who must mime all her communication. Energetic and expressive, with the ability to pick up choreography and direction quickly, Avalon was fantastic and soon proved her worth.

The other new members were all young and could dance; they are easily spotted because they are usually in the front row! Thankfully all but one of the main roles was cast but we still had no leading man, Timothy, and were still light on support for the smaller roles as well as in the dance heavy chorus numbers. After much soul-searching and discussion about musical direction it was decided that Franky Garland, who had been signed up as Musical Director of *Salad Days*, would take the lead role and share the musical direction with David Mitchell. David had a regular Tuesday commitment with another musical group so accompanied and managed the music on Wednesdays and Sundays while Franky accompanied on Tuesdays but relied on recordings when he was rehearsing his own scenes. This was not ideal, but the show had to go on and it has proved to be a fair compromise with a great quality result.

Regarding the new members, Sophie took the part of Rowena and Asphinxia, as well as being very active in the chorus. Holly, just 17 years old on opening night, took the part of Fiona while Fabian nabbed the other lead man, Lord Nigel Danvers as well as the role of Bishop in the very athletic Bishop's Dance which he shared with Avalon. This left Helen and Lydia, persuaded to join us after the auditions, to take several smaller roles and add youth and quality to the more difficult choreographed numbers.

In the end we filled all the roles, gave new dialogue and/or singing opportunities to those who wanted them (all our participating regular members had speaking and/or singing roles), as well as welcomed six new members to our fold. Everyone got on very well, with rehearsals being great fun and the final show, although weird and wacky, a wonderful climax to our 6 months of activity. Together we overcame a lot of challenges that this small cast faced most weeks. Inevitably the impact of illness or a holiday was magnified when working as a small cast. Just one or two absences could mean that half of those paired up in an ensemble were without partners.

However, while a small cast is not what we would have chosen from the outset (and selling tickets to just half the usual number of friends and family is a drag) there is no doubt that the esprit de corps was excellent and we have all made new friends. Without the new members we would not have been able to cast the show, so they helped us snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. As we write this piece we estimate a loss of less than £2000, considerably less than losses on *Young Frankenstein*, *Betty Blue Eyes*, *Spamalot* or *Forbidden Planet* but just like those shows the critical reviews so far have been good.

If you've not yet met our new members, some of whom have expressed interest in *Anything Goes*, please introduce yourselves on November 6th at the Open Evening. We hope to see you there.

About Anything Goes

Anything Goes is set onboard the ocean liner S. S. American, where nightclub singer/evangelist Reno Sweeney is en route from New York to England. Her pal Billy Crocker has stowed away to be near his love, Hope Harcourt, but the problem is Hope is engaged to the wealthy Lord Evelyn Oakleigh.

Joining this love triangle on board the luxury liner are Public Enemy #13, Moonface Martin and his sidekick-in-crime Erma. With the help of some elaborate disguises, tap-dancing sailors and good old-fashioned blackmail, Reno and Martin join forces to help Billy in his quest to win Hope's heart.

WAOS are doing the 2022 Version which features a revised script, updated in light of contemporary sensibilities. In this version, the race of the characters is not pivotal to the plot.

This 2022 Revision has twice as much dance music as the 1962 version and includes the hits "I Get a Kick Out of You," "You're the Top," "Friendship," "It's De-Lovely" and the title song, along with "Easy to Love," "Goodbye, Little Dream, Goodbye" and "Buddie, Beware."

Fancy Taking Part ...

We start rehearsals for *Anything Goes* with a Welcome Evening on Wednesday 6th November, at Witham Public Hall at 7:30pm.

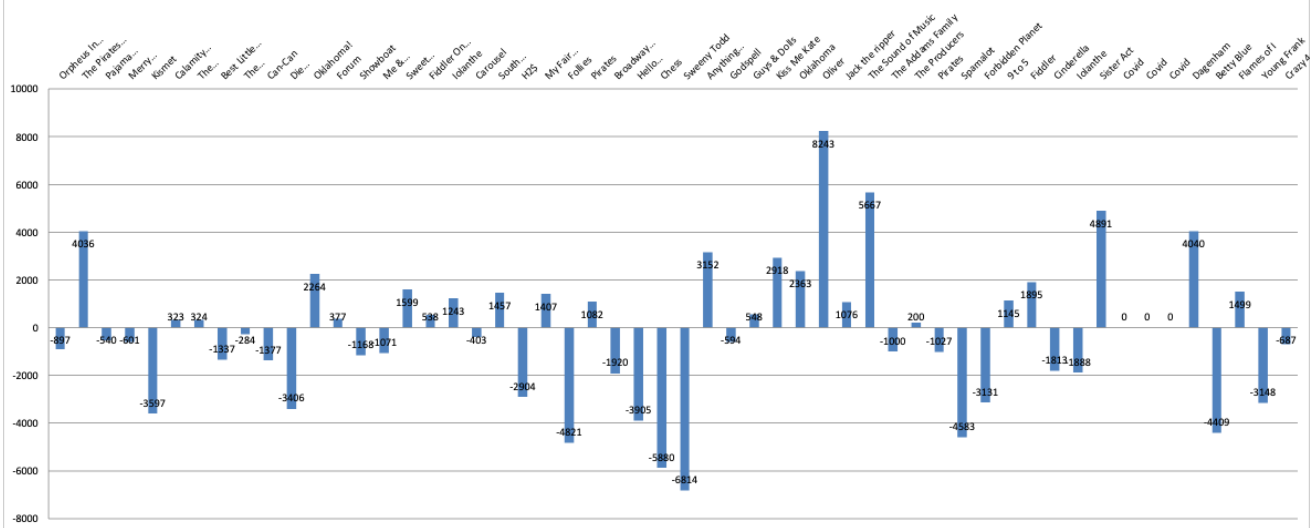
A Look Ahead to White Christmas

White Christmas is a dazzling musical that sprinkles holiday cheer like confetti! Follow the charmingly charismatic duo, Bob Wallace and Phil Davis, as they trade their military uniforms for slick suits and swing into the spotlight. With dreams of a snowy holiday in Vermont, they enlist the help of the fabulous sister duo, Betty and Judy Haynes, who can belt out a tune like nobody's business.

Together, they whip up a whirlwind of romantic entanglements and toe-tapping numbers, including the iconic title song, *White Christmas*, which is enough to make even the Grinch shed a tear. Watch as Bob and Betty's chemistry heats up during "The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing," while Phil and Judy prove that "Sisters" really do make the world go 'round—especially when they're harmonizing in dazzling dresses!

Filled with heartwarming moments and dazzling dance numbers, *White Christmas* is a celebration of love, friendship, and the magic of the season, all wrapped up in a sparkly bow of nostalgia. So grab your hot cocoa and get ready to experience a show that's as sweet as a candy cane!

Profit/Loss on shows since 1997



Historical Context Regarding Show Choices, Finances and Sustainability

The chart above shows the net surplus/loss for each show since 1997. *Calendar Girls* is not included since we haven't yet audited the numbers for 2024. Interpretations of the data may differ but here are some indisputable conclusions .

- Only half of our shows have made a surplus, with a few (*Oliver!*, *Sound of Music*, *Sister Act* and *Made in Dagenham*) making over £4000 each.
- The three Sondheim shows (*Forum*, *Follies* and *Sweeney Todd*) lost in aggregate over £10,000.
- *Anything Goes*, last done in 2011, made a £3000 surplus ie it was popular then.

Some Personal Reflections

Choosing shows solely based on financial considerations is extremely difficult if not impossible to get right and we are probably kidding ourselves if we think we can second guess what the audience will like. Very few shows seem to stand the test of time – *Oliver* and *Sound of Music* perhaps being amongst them. But who knows in 10 years time?

WAOS Committee

President	Stewart Adkins
Chairman	Trevor Drury
Treasurer	Mike Silvester
Secretary	Matt Waldie
Business Manager	Trevor Drury
Production Manager	Michael Mundell-Poole
Social Secretary	Emma Loring
Membership Secretary	Anita Goold
Stage Manager	Ben Sawyer
Committee Members	Tracey Hackett Richard McNeill

General Enquires – secretary@WAOS.org
 WAOS Web site - WWW.WAOS.ORG

Dates for your Diary

Anything Goes Open Evening - Nov 6, 19.30
 Witham Public Hall, Collingwood Rd
 Anything Goes Pre-audition rehearsals
 -12th Nov, 19.30-22.00 Spring Lodge CC;
 - 13th Nov, 19.30-22.00 Witham Public Hall
 - 19th Nov, 19.30-22.00 Spring Lodge
 Community Centre
 - 20th Nov, 19.30 -22.00. There is also an
 opportunity to audition here if unable to
 attend the main audition on Nov 24
 Anything Goes - Audition, Nov 24, 10.-
 16.00 Spring Lodge Community Centre
 (Further details nearer the time).
 WOW's Les Miserables -17-22 Feb, 2025
 Anything Goes - April 7-12, 2025
 White Christmas - Oct 27- Nov 1, 2025
 WAOScars - Jan 17, 2025

Check www.waos.org for all details re
 audition pieces, characterisations etc
 For more information about our shows, go to
<http://www.waos.org/news/forthcoming-shows/>