

Revival of the Newsletter

It's been a while since we last produced a Society Newsletter, but at the AGM it was agreed that despite the advent of the internet and Facebook, the circulation of a newsletter from time to time would provide another platform to keep members, and particularly friends whose support for the society is invaluable, informed, included and involved.

If you have news items to include, send me an email
Anne Howe: charity@weavers.org.uk

WOW!

WOW! continues to go from strength to strength attracting many talented young performers in Essex to both the summer workshops and February show. This year's production of *Thoroughly Modern Millie* was enjoyed by all; cast and audiences alike.

But ... huge congratulations to the production team for CATS (2018)

Directed by Rhianna Howard with Susannah Edom as the Musical Director and Shelley Moore as Choreographer, *CATS* was nominated for several awards by both NODA and the NETG, most notably winning the NODA East Award for Best Production! A most incredible and well-deserved achievement given that this award is judged alongside adult productions as well as other youth groups.

The show also won the NODA East Award for Best Youth Production, and Cerys Wilkins who played Grizabella won the award for Best Young Performer.

Legally Blonde will be the February 2020 production, with auditions in taking place in September.

WAOS Future Productions

Sister Act 21-26 Oct 2019

Director: Robyn Gowers
MD: Emma Nash

Book early!
Information over the page

Annie Get Your Gun 27 Apr-2 May 2020

Director: Claire Carr
MD: Jess Tabor

Made in Dagenham 26-31 Oct 2020

Director: Nikki Mundell-Poole
MD: James Tovey

Iolanthe – A Break from Tradition

WAOS's recent production of *Iolanthe*, for which Thomas Duchan was both Director and Musical Director certainly took stalwarts of traditional G&S productions out of their comfort zone, but it was a very well-received production with audiences complimenting cast members on performances and stating how enjoyable the show had been. Thanks must be extended to all; performers, front of house staff and back stage crew who helped make the production a success with special thanks to Thomas for his thoroughly enjoyable rehearsals and commitment to getting the best from everyone.

The show was reviewed by representatives from NODA, the NETG and the Braintree & Witham Times, all of whom naturally had different opinions. The BWT review is published in full below. The others can be read on the society's website.

<http://www.waos.org/past-shows/2019--iolanthe/>

Braintree & Witham Times **by Ron Fosker**

There seems to have been a general feeling recently, not without justification, that Gilbert and Sullivan, in its original form, would not appeal to today's audiences. Thus, we have had WOW's *Hot Mikado* in 2010 and in 2016 Witham Amateur Operatic Society's 'Australian version' of *Pirates of Penzance*. Now we have WAOS's *Iolanthe* in modern dress with references to texting, facetime, The Only Way is Essex and Brexit, imaginatively directed by Thomas Duchan.

It won't have pleased the purists, but it won favour with the likes of Stewart Adkins and Tim Sheppard, who have graced many G&S productions in the past. Adkins was in his fourth version of *Iolanthe* while Sheppard, now in his 63rd year with the society, appeared in WAOS's 1973 production.

There was of course much that they would recognise. The men's chorus still goes around singing 'tantantara' while the Lord Chancellor (Adkins) still has to get his tongue round the machine-gun delivery of Love Unrequited, a task he rises to with aplomb.

There is also room for the beautiful singing voices of Amy Buchanan (Phyllis) and Aimee Hart (*Iolanthe*) and it was good to see Rhianna Howard back on stage in a meaty part, giving her all as Queen of the Fairies (Essex version). Michael Watling is convincing as the love-torn Strephon with solid support from WAOS veterans Richard Herring and Ron Howe.

Proposals for new benefits for Members and Friends

Following the AGM, where benefits of Members and Friends were discussed, the Committee has suggested the following:

Members' Benefits (Proposed)

- Free Annual Draw for 2 free WAOS show tickets
- Newsletter
- Members' show night with nibbles at the bar
- Free programme for each show
- Invitation to Preview Night – depending on show
- Early booking rights before box office advertised as open to the general mailing list
- Loyalty bonus of 2 free tickets after 5 years of continuous membership
- Guarantee that loyal members who have continuously paid their membership fees for several years (to be discussed) can access ensemble wherever possible – dependent on show requirements.
- Preference given to loyal WAOS members over WOW members when competing for ensemble places – dependent on show requirements.

Friends' Benefits (Proposed)

- Free Annual Draw for 2 free WAOS show tickets
- Newsletter

Save the date: An EGM is planned for **Wed 5 June, 7pm** at Witham Public Hall to discuss these proposals. The date will be confirmed by email. Please come along; we would like to see as many members and friends there as possible.

Dates for your Diary, 2019

- **Sat 8 June:** Witham Community Day. WAOS/WOW will have a 'pitch' in the arena. If you are free why not offer to man the pitch for an hour, or just come along to say hello.
- **Sat 13 July.** Witham Carnival. We have been offered a free truck to display our society. Some of you will be on holiday, but those who are not, please offer your support. We will probably be showcasing *Sister Act*, but for more details talk to Emma Loring, the organiser.
- **Fri 20 September.** The WAOSCARS at Witham Public Hall, from 7pm/7.30pm. This social event is for both WAOS and WOW. There will be a chance to vote for Best Actor/Supporting Actor and many more, as well as applaud those nominated for Lifetime Achievement Awards. Great food is included, and WOW will be providing entertainment. £10 for adults and just £5 for WOW. Book your place now, perhaps book a table for 6 or 8. Spaced limited! **Contact Stewart Adkins for information and tickets.**
- **Sat/Sun 28-29 September.** All-day workshops at Spring Lodge as a professional dramatist helps us develop plot, sub-plots, narrative, characters and characterisations for our own musical. This is the first step towards commissioning/writing our own musical to celebrate the centenary of WAOS in 2021/22. This will be two days (not evenings) packed with drama games, improvisations, group work and more. Be prepared for a mixture of laughter, sadness and every emotion in-between as we explore our dramatic limits under the guidance of Sarah Osborne from Yew Tree, a drama coach, writer and director. Places limited to 20-25. Older WOW members also welcome.

Please email Stewart Adkins: stadkins@btconnect.com

Sister Act ... Book Early

21-26 October 2019

Members and Friends should be aware that tickets for a WAOS show are technically released via Positickets (our internet booking system) during the week of the previous show. This is to give audience members who like to plan ahead the opportunity to book while the excitement of the night out is still buzzing. About 20 tickets have been sold and a regular coach party has reserved 60 seats in the balcony for the Saturday Matinee. However, we do not actively market tickets until the end of June and use our Mailchimp distribution system to contact 1,450 subscribers and direct mailing for non-internet users.

This year we will be manning a pitch at the Witham Community Day (8 June) and we hope to have a float in the Witham Carnival on 13 July. Both events are potentially well-attended by local people and represent opportunities to hand out *Sister Act* flyers that are too good to miss.

Secure your favourite seats ...

.... before booking opens to the public.
Call our Box Office Manager, Janice Hawkes

0300 201 0080 (or book online at)

<http://www.waos.org/box-office/>

Auditions ... a successful day's work!

by Janet Hawkes

I was a reader for the *Sister Act* principal auditions on Sunday 19th May, along with Michael Mundell-Poole whom I'd seen as a very amusing and menacing Curtis in Nikki's production for Colchester. Reading was good fun and I'd recommend it to anyone who fancies an occasional spot of acting without the stress of having to remember lines, moves, entrances, exits, costumes etc ... all the little details that combine to deter me from auditioning and actually being in a show! The standard of auditionees was extremely high; it looked and sounded as if the entire show could have been cast very satisfactorily, two or three times, from the talent on offer – maybe with the exception of Monsignor O'Hara, still to be cast as I write this, though I wouldn't be surprised if one is lurking in our midst somewhere.

The Auditions Panel sported not just one experienced Musical Director, in the person of our own Emma Nash, but two, with Ian Myers guesting from Springers. With Keith Radley, Matt Waldie and especially Robyn Gowers, who proved when she directed *Oklahoma!* for WAOS that she can run a great music rehearsal herself if necessary, there were five sets of very discerning ears to listen to the nearly 50 auditionees. I'm really looking forward to hearing more of the stunning voices they selected, to tackle songs drawing on gospel and soul (of course), rap and jazz showbiz 'belts' as well as some more introspective, lyrical numbers. It's also going to be very funny! A real musical comedy treat in store for October.

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