

**DISTRICT 1 - DERBYSHIRE SOUTH
(REVIEWS BY KEITH SCOTT-SAVAGE)**

THE ARISTOCATS AND INTO THE WOODS

Presented by: **CENTRE STAGE THEATRE ARTS**
Producers: James Rayner, John Hale, Josephine Elliott, Nigel Taylor, Alastair Massey, Jaquie Middleton
Venue: Darley Abbey Village Hall

The production team deserve medals for staging the two productions in this totally unsuitable venue. A small stage area, with obvious limitations, with the floor area at the front filled with the cast for the second production, I must praise their overall discipline whilst The Aristocats was being performed.

The Aristocats was wholeheartedly performed by the younger element of the school, with enthusiastic chorus numbers and some names for the future in Michael Smart's O'Malley and Emily Cannon as Scat Cat. The cast followed the taped music well and deserved the applause at the end.

Into The Woods, performed by the older members was a very good performance of a difficult piece, particularly playing to a taped music background, with good performances from all but, I must mention Emma Mulvany as Little Red Riding Hood, Emily Bramley as the Bakers wife, and Elliott Bell and Matt Ripley as the princes. The Agony number I particularly enjoyed. Congratulations to all for an enjoyable two hours.

THE MIKADO

Presented by: **ROSE HILL MUSICAL SOCIETY**
Director: Beverley Graham
Musical Director: Bryan Clarke
Venue: The Guildhall theatre, Derby

From the novel use of "Geisha Girls" in the overture, this was a classy well paced production, with impressive choral movement throughout. Confident performances by all the principals, particularly Craig Arme as Nanki-Poo and Jo Howland as Yum-Yum, well supported by Peter Featherstone as Pooh-Bah, Tony Eley as Pish-Tush, Colin Keast as Ko-Ko and a superb Mikado by Mike Spriggs. Equally Ruth Birkin as Pitti-Sing, Sara Wilson as Peep-Bo and Katisha played by Margaret Featherstone, were all in fine form.

Overall the principals singing was superb, with a simple but most effective set. Good costumes and lighting and finally an excellent orchestra. This was one of the best productions of the Mikado I have seen for a long time. Congratulations to all and thank you for the hospitality shown by Rose Hill Musical Society.

THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS

Presented by: **DERBY OPERA COMPANY**
Director & Musical Director: Andrew Nicklin
Choreographer: Fiona Carratu
Venue: The Guildhall Theatre, Derby

On a very minimalist stage that struggled to cope with the number of cast, and hesitant opening scenes the production settled down. A solid performance by Steve Foster as the Sheriff, with fine support from Lynn Nelson as Mona, set the tone. Excellent cameo roles by Steve Dunning and Simon Theobald, with Howard Nelson as Melvin P Thorpe, were the comedy highlights. The men came into their own in the Aggie Song and the girls' in Hard Candy Christmas. Nice interpretation of Doatsey May by Rachel Clines. I felt the sound and lighting certainly could have been more effective, but overall a very creditable performance on a very tight performance space.

MURDERED TO DEATH

Presented by: **THE MARLOWE PLAYERS**
Director: Emily Peers
Venue: Darley Abbey Village Hall

The Marlowe Players can always be relied on to give a good performance, and their production of Murdered to Death is no exception. Introduced as 'The Funniest Whodunnit Agatha Christie Never Wrote', it certainly lived up to expectations. With an outstanding performance from Mike Asprey as Inspector Pratt, a bumbling Clouseau type, good support from Martin Illston as the Forgetful Colonel and Marjorie Howarth's Miss Maple, very convincingly played, it made for an excellent evenings' performance. The whole cast deserve great credit in this hilarious piece. Andrea White, Felicity Freeman and Sue Orme made great work of their parts. Jak Carr as the Butler created laughter throughout. John Freeman and Simon Paget completed this very talented cast. Well done Marlowes!

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

(Review by Joyce Handbury)

Presented by: **LONG EATON OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Director: Elaina Evans
Musical Director: David Walker
Choreography: Gemma Griffiths
Venue: May Hall, Trent College, Long Eaton
Date: April 2009

The role of Tevye is very demanding and it was handled superbly by Kevin Butcher. His rendition of 'Tradition' and 'If I were a Rich Man' were outstanding. Golde played by Maria Lawrence was self assured and she has a lovely singing voice. Sheriden Lowe (Tzeitel), Rachele Bragg (Hodel) and Rachel Murray (Chava) were an absolute delight and Tom Halton excelled as Motel whilst Phil Deakin was impressive as Perchik. They were well supported by all the rest of the principal line-up. A fine chorus provided some wonderful moments of both singing and dancing particularly in 'To Life' and in the very moving wedding ceremony and the exuberant wedding celebrations that followed, which came to an abrupt end by the realistic actions of the Russian soldiers. A simple but effective set with excellent props, appropriate costumes, a good orchestra (loved the accordion) together with a great cast made this a special production. Congratulations to everyone involved.

SIMPLY THE BEST

(Review by Joyce Handbury)

Presented by: **THE GOOD COMPANIONS STAGE SOCIETY**
Director: Keith Scott-Savage
Musical Director: Zoe Varney
Choreography: Pauline Reader
Venue: The Guildhall Theatre, Derby
Date: March 2009

'Simply the Best' was a show to commemorate 50 years of this society. An innovative touch was the screen to one side of the stage on to which were projected programme covers for the shows that they have performed during these years. Songs from these shows were jam packed into the programme and were interspersed with related sketches. It was colourful and energetic from start to finish with some memorable solos, great chorus numbers, engaging choreography expertly danced, all of which showcased the whole company in one way or another. "The Rhythm of Life", was a superb end to celebrate 50 years of The Good Companions Stage Society, because they certainly have the rhythm of music and dance, and long may it continue!

THE MERRY WIDOW

(Review by Joyce Handbury)

Presented by: **CENTRAL OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Producer: Nigel Taylor
Musical Director: David Blackwell
Choreography: Jean Gemmill and Lucy Sharratt
Venue: Landau Forte College, Derby
Date: March 2009

The opening scene with its lovely sweeping staircase and beautiful chandeliers was quickly brought to life with the beautiful chorus singing and glamourously dressed cast. Malcolm Worton was an ideal Baron making the most of the comedy interaction particularly with Tony Carter as a 'camp' Njegus and Lisa Mills was charming as Valencienne. Whilst Kathryn Fitchett and Paul Mills coped superbly with the vocal demands of the roles of Anna and Danilo, there was no spark of emotional passion between them which is so essential to make their past love for each other, believable. The main principals were well supported by Adrian Redfern as Camille, Toby Bradford as Brioche, Jon Morris as Cascada, Phil Lindsey as Kromov and Louise Hatton as Olga. Lovely costumes throughout, excellent singing, effective choreography and a good off-stage orchestra all ensured that we had a wonderful evenings entertainment. Congratulations must go to Nigel Taylor and all the production team.

OLIVER

Presented by: **CENTRE STAGE THEATRE ARTS**
Producers: James Rayner & John Hale
Direction, Musical Direction & Choreography: James Rayner, John Hale, Nigel Taylor, Jacque Middleton & Josephine Elliott.
Venue: Landau forte College, Derby
Date: Wed 22nd to Sat 25th July 2009

A very entertaining youth production. Led by the workhouse children and Fagins gang, the youngsters worked very hard and fully deserved the applause at the finale. Owen Day in the title role gave a sympathetic performance. Good characterisations, particularly from Matt Ripley as Mr Bumble and Lucy Bramley as Widow Cornet, gave the show early impetus. A dominant Fagin in Tom Eklid and Emily Bramley as Nancy, kept the show flowing, along with Daniel Goodall's menacing Bill Sykes. All the principals gave good accounts, but the contribution of the whole cast made for a good evenings entertainment. A striking set and pleasing musical accompaniment completed the evening. I am sure that the alternative cast playing on other nights will be equally successful, and I wish them well. Thank you Centre Stage.

THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD

(Review by Martin Tailby)

Presented by: **MELBOURNE OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Director: Gary Askam
Musical Director: Bryan Clarke
Choreographer: Catherine Adams
Venue: Castle Donington Community College
Date: 9 April – 2 May 2009

An excellent production, well cast with good direction. Particularly liked the use of the overture, very imaginative and setting the mood for the piece. Some good singing from the principals, an excellent Jack Point played by Melvyn Edwards. All the other principals were well cast and the chorus performed well. Good costumes and settings, excellent orchestra.

All in all a good night at the theatre.

It is the first time I have been invited to see this company. Best wishes for your next production.

DISTRICT 2 - DERBYSHIRE NORTH (REVIEWS BY JOYCE HANDBURY)

ROBINSON CRUSOE AND THE PIRATES

Presented by: **BOLSOVER DRAMA GROUP**
Director: Mick Whitehouse
Co-Director: Leanne Whitehouse
Musical Director: Chris Davis
Choreographer: Leanne Whitehouse
Venue: Moorfield Hall Theatre, The Bolsover School
Date: January 2009

Alan Frayne's very funny script was brought to life by a strong principal line-up. Donna Knowles as Coral, Spirit of the Seas and Paul Holland as Davy Jones ably brought out the good and evil of their respective roles. Dawn Shearwood as Robinson Crusoe and Lyndsey Whitehouse as Juanita made for a lovely 'couple' and their harmony singing was delightful. Derrick Hulett and Julie Clifford as Skull-Duggery and Cross-Bones had superb comic timing bringing the most out of this funny script and Derrick carried it all off with a 'peg-leg'! Ian Brady was very convincing as Margarita Jucilita and his startling number of lavish costume changes was in itself worthy of praise. Her son Nutty Nick was, for me, the star of the show. His lively interpretation and delivery were outstanding, he literally played his socks off! All the principals, including those not mentioned, were great, but I must just add that Steve Sowerby was ideal as the smooth, intellectual upper-class Friday. Good sound and lighting effects, excellent costumes and chorus numbers, especially the Hornpipe, all added to the fun and enjoyment of the evening. Congratulations to Mick Whitehouse and all his hard working team.

ANYTHING GOES

Presented by: **BELPER MUSICAL THEATRE**
Producer: Anne Dunning
Musical Director: Terry Bailey
Choreography: Becky Dunning
Venue: Belper School
Date: February 2009

Producing 'Anything Goes' on a small stage is a great challenge for any society but Ian Jennison, who both designed and built the set, must be congratulated for its effectiveness. Jen Lewis sang and danced with skill, enthusiasm and flair, bringing out the sassiness in the role of Reno and Mark Pollard's superb singing voice and acting skills made him a perfect choice for the role of Billy Crocker. For me, the villainous aspect of Moonface Martin's character was not fully portrayed by Steve Dunning's interpretation although his comic delivery was excellent. Elizabeth Brookes as Hope Harcourt was elegantly serene and the duet with Billy, "All through the Night", was delightful. Ian Jennison's natural talent for comedy was very much in evidence in the role of Sir Evelyn Oakleigh and Gordon Gell as Elisha J. Whitney excelled and was very convincing when 'drunk'. Lovely costumes, very good harmony singing by the chorus, lively choreography with nice tap sequences all added to make this a very entertaining show.

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

Presented by: **HEANOR OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Director: Rob Corner
Musical Director: Mandy Fogg
Choreography: Linda Hardy
Venue: Heanor Gate Science College
Date: February 2009

A simple stylised set with what was to be a well used walk-way around the orchestra prepared the audience for what was to be a colourful and lively show. The singing of the principals was more musical theatre than the purists would expect from G&S but nevertheless all coped well with the task. Kim Harris was a dashing Pirate King although for me, his red trousers were out of place! Daniel Mee has a strong singing voice and was well suited to the part of Frederick and Harriet Twells handled the difficult role of Mabel extremely well. Chris Kemp was very creditable as The Major General and Carrie-Anne Corner was outstanding as Ruth. The main principals were strongly supported by Sam Barson as Samuel, Michelle Vardy as Kate, Julia Allsop as Edith Claire Farrand as Izzy and Gemma Hall as Bella. The choral singing was first class especially from the pirates but the real highlight for me was Tony Wignall as the Sergeant of Police and his superb band of Policemen - they were hilarious. Well done to all involved for being brave enough to tackle G&S and for pulling it off quite effectively.

SWEENEY TODD

Presented by: **YOUNG INSPIRATIONS THEATRE COMPANY**
Director/Producer: Dot Clarke
Musical Director: Melanie Gilbert
Choreography: Laura Coe
Venue: The Pomegranate Theatre, Chesterfield
Date: March 2009

Luke Spencer as Sweeney Todd was absolutely superb. His singing and diction were impeccable and with his charismatic stage presence he made the part his own. Fion Jones has a splendid singing voice and with great comic timing was impressive as Mrs. Lovatt. Georgina Bailey's lovely soprano voice was well suited to the role of Johanna and Daniel Woolley as Anthony was excellent and has a simply wonderful voice. Other roles were admirably portrayed by Darren Kimberley as Pirelli, Connor Macnamara as the Judge, Becky Mann as the Beggar, Richard Buxton as the Beadle and Matthew Staten as Tobias. The depth of talent in this group is demonstrated when six members can share the roles of the three leading ladies - Nicola Webb and Fion Jones as Mrs. Lovatt, Katie Lockwood and Georgina Bailey as Johanna and Emily Cross and Becky Mann as the Beggar each performing on alternate nights. Congratulations must go to the Musical Director, Melanie Gilbert and to the orchestra for mastering the technically demanding score.

This show is a challenge for an adult group to do never mind a group of young people but 'Young Inspirations', under the direction of Dot Clarke, rose to the challenge of this complicated show and with a dramatic set, effective lighting and sound, produced a truly wonderful production.

MACK AND MABEL

(Review by Keith Scott-Savage)

Presented by: **RIPLEY AND ALFRETON OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Producer: Phil Simcox
Musical Director: Andy Booth
Choreographer: Chris Parkes
Venue: Alfreton Grange Arts College

Excellent performances from Alan Richmond as Mack, and Louise Coope as Mabel made for a very enjoyable evenings entertainment. Alan ranged from the brash arrogant to the sympathetic, confidently done with the bonus of a fine voice. Louise complimented him very well taking Mabel from opening naivety to the forlorn at the end. Good support from Sinead Parkin as Lottie, with a fine tap routine, other sound roles by Wayne Buxton as Fatty Arbuckle and Paul Wilson as William Desmond Taylor. With a good chorus line up, a simple but effective set, and a super band Phil made the best use of the limited stage space to create a vibrant performance. A good choice of show for the company and many thanks for your hospitality. Best wishes for Chess.

MURDERED TO DEATH

Presented by: **BOLSOVER DRAMA GROUP**
Director: Janet Koszegi
Producer: Kim Kas
Venue: The Assembly Rooms, Bolsover
Date: May 2009

The group put a local spin on the play by setting it in Bolsover with the officers coming from nearby Chesterfield. Praise must first go to Ian Simpson who gave a fine, exuberant performance as the inept, pompous, accident prone, aptly named, Inspector Pratt. He coped admirably with the many wrongly used and mis-pronounced words also Istvan Koszegi as the deferential Constable was an excellent stooge to the Inspector. Ken Radmore's portrayal as the perverse Colonel Craddock was another fine performance and Derek Hulett was very amusing and believable as the hapless Butler who slowly became more and more inebriated! Chris Peck as the bogus French art dealer and Michelle Simpson as the fake upper crust aristocrat were both convincing in their roles as was Rachel Hoole as the caring niece and Donna Knowles as Mildred, the wealthy aunt. Miss Maple was effectively delivered by Kim Sas and Hazel Simpson was imposing as the Colonel's wife. A great set and props with appropriate lighting all contributed towards an entertaining and enjoyable evening.

HELLO DOLLY

Presented by: **CHESTERFIELD OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Director: Andrew Davie
Musical Director: Jonathan Francis
Choreography: Julie Metcalfe and Paula Wilson
Venue: Pomegranate Theatre, Chesterfield
Date: April 2009

Sue Siddall was totally convincing in the demanding role of Dolly Levi and aptly demonstrated her considerable acting ability, superb sense of timing and stage presence, as well as her powerful singing voice. Paul Webber as Horace Vendergelder was equally convincing - a perfect partnership. Karl Brennan (Cornelius) and Andy Moore (Barnaby) were a wonderful double act having a great aptitude for comedy, particularly Andy, and Karl's fine singing voice excelled in 'It Only Takes a Moment'. Irene Malloy was well played by Julie Metcalfe and Alison Doram was scintillating as Minnie Fay. The choreography throughout was excellent and was superbly executed, none more so than in the 'waitresses' gallop which was hectic, polished, acrobatic and spectacular. Some good supporting roles and chorus numbers, lovely costumes and scenery, and a first-rate orchestra all added to produce a lively and entertaining show.

**DISTRICT 3 - NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
(REVIEWS BY PHIL WILLIAMS)**

MOTHER GOOSE

Presented by: **BLYTH PLAYERS**
Director: Barry Pickwell
Choreographer: Jeanette Adams
Venue: Barnby Memorial Hall Blyth

Plenty of traditional pantomime fun and activities in this production. With limited space considering the size of the cast, Barry made good use of all facilities with well organised movement and fine groupings. A talented cast provided comedy, drama and music, with good audience interaction throughout, especially Kerri Sinclair (a lovely Principal Girl with superb singing ability), Malcolm Pike (typical Dame) and Michael Pearce (very Nasty Nick). Good, varied choreography and fine dancing from the young dancers integrated well with other stage movement. Colourful costumes, fine sets and props together with effective lighting all enhanced the action. Very enjoyable entertainment.

LES MISERABLES (SCHOOL EDITION)

Presented by: **NOTTINGHAM ARTS THEATRE YOUTH GROUP**
Director: Maggie Andrew
Musical Director: Nathan Truesdale
Venue: Nottingham Arts Theatre

This was a superb theatrical experience from a young cast, with the ability, talent and passion to warrant senior status. Inspired directing from Maggie and Nathan must have expanded the abilities of many in the cast and blended them into a remarkable team. Excellent principal performances all round developing strong characters, using the drama and music so very well, none more so than Oliver Metcalf, a super Valjean, There was outstanding chorus work both vocally and dramatically with action and re-action in plenty, and lovely solo lines. The night belonged to the cast and the standing ovation at the end said it all.

THE FULL MONTY

Presented by: **EREWASH MUSICAL SOCIETY**
Producer: Laurie Trott
Musical Director: Giles Urwin
Venue: Trent College Long Eaton

Humour, drama and strong character portrayals throughout in this super production. The wide range of musical styles was nicely controlled with very competent playing from the orchestra. The very talented cast gave us real characters with excellent performances from all, typified by Daniel Bates and Louise O'Boyle in their outstanding performances as Jerry and Vicky, together with Tom Hopcroft (young Nathan) a young man with a bright future. Good sets, furniture and props were all efficiently handled by the backstage crew. Fine lighting and costumes added to the occasion. The audience certainly left in happy mode, especially, I suspect, the ladies!

SNOW WHITE & THE SEVEN DWARFS

Presented by: **NOTTINGHAM WEST MUSIC & DRAMA SOCIETY**
Director: Graham Lambert
Musical Director: Lisa Downie
Choreographer: Rosie Lishman
Venue: Kimberly School Nottingham

Traditional pantomime with lots of fun in this good production, making the most of the humour in the script. Plenty of popular songs which were all well directed, played and sung. The strong cast worked well with the audience and displayed their individual characters to the full, especially Rosie Lishman (very evil Queen) and Emma Heydon (very dashing Prince). The fine team of "dwarfs" also showed very individual characters. Skilful choreography and delightful dancing added to the visual effect, as did the super costumes. Good lighting and fine sets also helped, with efficient back stage work throughout. Excellent family entertainment.

THE PRODUCERS

Presented by: **CARLTON OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Director: Sarah Warnsby
Musical Director: Chris Rees
Choreographer: Rachael Rees
Venue: Nottingham Playhouse

This was without doubt an outstanding production. Excellent stage and musical direction brought out the best of an extremely talented cast who put their heart and soul into the performance. Typical were superb portrayals of Max and Leo (Simon Theobald, Jonathan Allen) together with bubbly blond Ulla (Nicola Bilton), but all the cast deserve mention. Super choreography and dance rekindled memories of Busby Berkeley routines, while very good chorus singing and excellent costumes were a delight to ear and eye. The stage crew were super-efficient with the many changes and lighting used to perfection. West End, eat your heart out!

ANNIE

Presented by: **MANSFIELD AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Director: Pam Frith
Musical Director: Dr Ian Hibbert
Choreographer: Katie Wright
Venue: Palace Theatre Mansfield

Plenty of emotion and humour, combined with children and a dog can't fail and Pam made the most of all of them. Likewise Ian led the music well with nice interpretation from stage and pit. On stage a strong cast provided good performances throughout, not least Chloe Lee-Varley (heart tugging Annie), Lionel Castle (Daddy), Theresa Stafford (Grace) and Judi O'Leary (Hannigan). Fine performances by the Orphans, especially the very young ones, and good backing from the chorus combined well with nice choreography and dance numbers. The good costumes, set and lighting all helped in providing good entertainment enjoyed by all.

KISS ME KATE

Presented by: **BEESTON MUSICAL THEATRE GROUP**
Director: Linda Hardy
Musical Director: Morris Fisher
Choreographer: James Rayner
Venue: Roundhill School Beeston

This was a fine production with plenty of movement, making good use of the comedy and drama of the piece. Musically well controlled, with good interpretation from stage and pit at all times. Very good performances from all the principal line up, especially the strong characters so well portrayed by Stephaine Grey-Blest (Kate) and Martin Holtom (Petruccio). Newcomer Morven Macleod was a superb Bianca and must have a great future. Excellent choreography and well danced throughout, especially "Too darn hot". Good costumes, set and lighting all helped to provide the right background to the action. A very enjoyable evening.

THE GRADUATE

Presented by: **NOTTINGHAM ARTS THEATRE**
Director: Gordon Parsons
Venue: Nottingham Arts Theatre

Plenty of reminders of the 60s in this excellent production, with good use of the stage and clever use of the set components. The cast certainly established their varied characters very well with strong portrayals throughout, especially Kelvin Coleman (Ben). Julie Pearson (Mrs Robinson) and Bushra Naseer (Elaine) who between them provided a whole range of emotions. The moments of humour were well played, contrasting with the more serious aspects. The scene changes were very well done and the music nicely arranged to cover them. Super costumes aided the story and helped set the period. An entertaining and thought provoking evening.

BAREFOOT IN THE PARK

Presented by: **NOTTINGHAM ARTS THEATRE**
Director: Robert Goll
Venue: Nottingham Arts Theatre

Back to the 1960s again for this group and another very good production providing a real mix of emotions and relationships while maintaining a good pace throughout. The cast gave super portrayals of the range of characters involved, especially Jasmine Choo (Corrie) and Jeff Pasternack (Paul) who worked off each other so very well, with Jackie Dunn (Mrs Banks) and David Shakleton (Victor) providing character strong support throughout. The interesting set provided a very suitable background and was well used. Costumes, props, lighting and music also helped to set the right atmosphere. An entertaining, thought provoking evening.

SING ME A SONG

Presented by: **THREE COUNTIES MUSICAL SOCIETY**
Producer: Colin Marsh
Musical Director: Christine Warren
Venue: Chatsworth Centre Long Eaton

This was a compilation of songs from shows covering the 1950-90s period providing a good range of music and emotion. Christine controlled the music very well and produced plenty of expression particularly in the final section, "Les Miserables", when no scores were used and all eyes were on her! A good team of principals, particularly Pam Barlow, provided the individual items. Well done the two ladies who took on items so effectively at short notice (due to illness). The chorus sang well with some nice quiet sections and very good ladies' two-part singing in the "Summer Song" section.

CURTAIN CALL

Presented by: **WORKSOP LIGHT OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Producer: Joanne Lassamans
Musical Director: Paul O'Leary
Choreographer: Kristi Chambers
Venue: The Regal Theatre, Worksop

A festival of song and dance set in a fictitious but recognisable Amateur Operatic production. Well presented and arranged with plenty of colour and good use of the stage area. Likewise the wide range of music was nicely controlled and always a pleasing sound. Fine singing from all the soloists and they were backed by very good chorus work especially in the "Les Miserables" section which was a delight to eye and ear. Super dance sequences from Kristi and her team and also the talented young Donna Pressley team. Very good entertainment which demonstrated the depth of Company talent available.

KINDLY KEEP IT COVERED

Presented by: **BLYTH PLAYERS**
Director: Malcolm Pike
Venue: Barnby Memorial Hall Blyth

A farce requires plenty of action, reaction and comedy and this well directed one certainly had all these. With no stage curtains, the splendid set greeted you on entry to the hall and set the atmosphere straight away. A fine cast interacted with each other very well, with super performances from Andrew Robinson (a very harassed Roland) and Zena Robinson (a formidable mother- in-law), well supported by some good cameo performances. The well designed set and effective props provided full scope for all the action despite the stage size limitations. An extremely enjoyable evening.

SEUSSICAL JNR

Presented by: **NOTTINGHAM OPERATIC SOCIETY YOUTH GROUP**
Director: Amanda Hall/Lesley Walters
Musical Director: Ray McLeod
Choreographer: Amanda Hall/Lesley Walters
Venue: Sandfield Theatre Nottingham

An excellent show throughout, led by an inspired production team who made the most of a very talented group of young performers. On stage we were treated to singing, dancing and acting of a high calibre, combined with not a little stage presence, particularly from Liam Hall (Cat), Damien Ebanks (Horton) and Abigale Moore (Jo-Jo). Every principal deserves mention as do the chorus who backed them so very well, right down to the youngest; all played their part. Good lighting and sound, with fine costumes and props to back the action. Everyone concerned should be very proud of what was achieved.

CRANFORD

Presented by: **NOTTINGHAM ARTS THEATRE**
Director: Patricia Tribe
Venue: Nottingham Arts Theatre

A period piece with a difficult structure, but Patricia rose to the challenge by linking many scenes and making very good use of the stage facilities while maintaining the period feel throughout. The story dictates that ladies dominate the cast and indeed they did with super performances from Laura Butler (Mary), Carol Parkinson (Matilda) and Irene Starkie (Deborah). They were backed by a talented cast with good character development throughout, including the new members. Superb costumes certainly helped, together with effective sets and furniture, all drawing us in the 1840s. A challenge yes, but the team pulled it off!

SWEET CHARITY

Presented by: **NOTTINGHAM ARTS THEATRE**
Director: Colin Treliving
Musical Director: Nathan Truesdale
Choreographer: Becky Langford
Venue: Nottingham Arts Theatre

Another fine production from this group, very well directed by Colin with good use of the stage while bringing out the drama and humour of the piece. Nathan maintained fine control of the music throughout, keeping a good balance between stage and band. A superb performance by Jessica Nicklin as Charity was backed by an impressive talented cast who performed very well as individuals and as a team. Excellent choreography and dance was a delight to see, while the fine colourful costumes especially the "flower power" group certainly added to the visual effect. Plenty of highlights in a very entertaining evening.

RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET

Presented by: **EMMANUEL PRODUCTIONS**
Director: Amanda Hall
Musical Director: David Williams
Choreographer: Amanda Hall
Venue: Emmanuel School, Nottingham

An impressive production in impressive premises from this youth group. Very well directed, with Amanda making innovative use of the available stage and floor area. The musical side was nicely controlled with fine playing from the young band. Plenty of talent on stage with good performances from all the principals, especially Lois Brown (Miranda), Clare Wicks (Gloria) and Damien Ebanks (Cookie) together with impressive skating from Phil McNeill. Good choreography showcased some talented young dancers while the very practical set formed a fine background to the production. A few technical problems, but still a very entertaining evening with lots of promise for the future.

DISTRICT 4 - LINCOLNSHIRE NORTH (REVIEWS BY ANNE KEY-HUCKERBY)

PINOCCHIO

Presented by: **WADDINGTON D.S**
Director: Nick Blakesley
Musical Director: Helen Wines
Choreographers: Mike Kelly, Amanda Pues and Myia Wright

Doreen Moger's script tells the story simply but with plenty of topical references. Phil Darling's make-up as Old Nick, the baddie, was extremely good. He relished all the boos and hisses from the audience. Nick Blakesley and Margery Thompson were highly amusing as a couple of Stromboli's circus clowns. Helen Wines was most appealing in the title role and Rachel France's Jiminy Cricket was lively and friendly. All the rest of the cast played their parts well. The set was attractive with complementary lighting and the costumes were good. On the whole the scene-changes took place smoothly. The overall result was a most enjoyable production where fun was of paramount importance.

TREASURE ISLAND

Presented by: **HORNCastle THEATRE COMPANY**
Director: Chris Liversidge
Musical Director: Chris Hinkins
Choreographer: Nancy Byrne

Adapted from Stevenson's book by the Director, this show provided an excellent evening's entertainment. A first rate line-up of principals included Emma Hutchinson who, as the hero, Jim Hawkins, revealed a most pleasant singing voice. Much of the humour came from Chris Byrne and Joe Ritjakis as Poop and Deck with Jon Cooke as the larger-than-life Dame Hilda Hawkins. Graham Turner was suitably evil as Long-John-Silver and the rest of the characters and chorus performed very well. The dancers' routines were nicely executed. I particularly enjoyed the 'Voulez Vous' number and the undersea episode with its UV lighting. The scenery was most impressive with backcloths of remarkable artistry. The musical accompaniment throughout was excellent. Congratulations

THE PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE

Presented by: **WHARFINGERS**, {Louth Playgoers Youth Group}

Directors: Helen Appleton and Carole Ashcroft

There are not enough superlatives available to describe how well Rosie Whitcombe portrayed the title role. It was an enormous undertaking and she rose so well to the many challenges it posed despite only being in her mid-teens. The four girls who played Sandy, Jenny, Monica and Mary together with Charlotte Oliver {Sister Helena} and Sam Pelham as Mr Perry all were strong in support. The rest of the characters were quite well-defined. The schoolgirls who were responsible for the scene-changes did so most efficiently. I am told the stage management, lighting and sound as well as the set design were all undertaken by yet more of the young people. A thought-provoking production, this was pleasing theatre.

THE CEMETERY CLUB

Presented by: **SCOTHERN PLAYERS**

Director: John Anthony

Congratulations to all who were in any way responsible for the superb set and excellent props. The lighting was good, the incidental music was inspired and the costumes throughout were entirely suitable. Granted, a few prompts were needed, but these did not detract from the success of the production.. All five characters were played wonderfully well. Gloria Poole made Doris's cutting remarks so telling; Ruth Noon was suitably flighty as Lucille while the third member of the club, Ida, was portrayed beautifully by Jan Clode. Jim Adams {Samuel Katz} and Teana Hutchinson {Mildred} were equally believable in their roles. There was plenty of humour in this play interspersed with anger, pathos and regret. Extremely worthy entertainment.

SNOW WHITE

(Review by Gloria Poole)

Presented by: **LINDSEY RURAL PLAYERS**

Director: Abigail Wright

It was an absolute pleasure to watch the seven dwarfs, for without exception they were animated, attentive and a great joy. Appropriately they were frightened by the wicked Queen Eglantine {Catherine Hughes} who was booed loudly at every entrance; a sign of a well-portrayed 'baddie. The traditional comedy characters were Pix and Mixx and the audience warmed to them from the start. Due to a family illness, Ian Myers' part as Dame Victoria Sandwich was played by the Director, and although it is unusual for a woman to play the Dame, this worked. All the cast portrayed their parts well. The set was bright and colourful and the costumes blended well. The lighting was excellently crafted by Patrick Markham. The show was full of energy and the momentum was maintained right to the end. I would have preferred live music, but the backing tracks used were very good. The well-written script by Jan Allen made this evening and enjoyable one.

MOTHER GOOSE

Presented by: **TRUSTHORPE VILLAGE HALL THEATRE GROUP**

Directors: Chris Flanagan and Chris Pratt

Musical Director: Michael Willson

Choreographers: Zoe Hemming and Sam Rowland

There was much to applaud in this delightful pantomime where many of the cast and chorus were really young. A good line-up of principals featured the co-directors as the Squire and Mother Goose who were responsible for much of the humour along with Jordan Baker and Connor White as Daft and Dafter. Added to these was fifteen year old Gareth Kiedyk who played a blinder as Jack. Lovely vocal ability was provided by Briony Bowen{Robin}, Natalie Glew{Jill} and Jemma Willson{Mary} while the local vicar, the Rev. Allison Harvey, was the truly evil Demon King. The rest of the named characters were nicely aspected and the chorus gave good support. The three- piece band's accompaniment was appreciated. The costumes were delightful and the scenery was truly a work of art with good use of lighting. Well done!

PANTOMONIUM

Presented by: **CHERRY PLAYERS**

Director: Rachel Dodson

Choreographers: Katie Cheetham and Rachel Dodson

I must admit that I am a fan of traditional pantomime and this show, written by the Director, was decidedly different. The story told how the witch, Gladys, planned to bring down Pantoland with all its well-known characters. There was plenty of comedy from the Ugly Sisters {Mark Toyne and Paul Harding-Hubbard} as well as from the witch's inept henchmen Hiss and Boo {Wendy Stevens and Andy Seymour}. The stage management and continuity was good. The principals' singing was notable and the dance routines were well-executed .I must say I felt the amplification of the taped music was too loud at times and there were quite a number of prompts. However, this show found great favour with the audience, and that is what really matters.

PETER PAN

Presented by: **SAXILBY DRAMA CIRCLE**
Director: Chris Siddall,
Assistant Director: Phil Siddall
Musical Director: Ian Atkinson
Choreographers: Yvonne and Yvette Kimber

There was plenty to cheer as well as to hiss and boo in this exciting production. Space does not permit me to name every single player. However, Emily Atkinson {Wendy} and Yvette Kimber in the title role; Jack Holliday and Harry Wood {John and Michael Darling}; Alannah Rasen {Tinkerbell} and Phil Siddall as Captain Hook gave very telling performances. Four of the dastardly pirates had a side-splittingly funny comedy spot and the Lost Boys, Indians, Fairies and Mermaids all made valuable contributions to the show. The singing throughout was confident and tuneful, the dance routines were lively and the sword fights were truly spectacular. The set was fine, the costumes were lovely and the lighting and sound effects were great. A delightful evening's entertainment

IRON

(Review by John Anthony)

Presented by: **GAINSBOROUGH THEATRE COMPANY**
Director: Barry Evans

As the title implies, Rona Munro's text was hard and uncompromising. The main storyline deals with Rosie {Helen Hempstock}, now a young woman, who after fifteen years comes to visit her mother, Fay {Jeanne Bain} in prison. Fay has been imprisoned for life for murdering her husband; Rosie's father. During their prison visits Fay and Rosie go on a journey of mutual and self discovery. The sub text of the play deals with the inevitably dysfunctional relationship that a prisoner has with her guards. Called simply Guard 1 {Roy Loates} and Guard 2 {Dawn Horrey} these are any prison guards in any prison anywhere in the world. It just so happens that our prison is in Scotland. The acting by all four cast members was excellent, diction faultless and the accents superb, although the piece did give Jeanne Bain and Helen Hempstock most chance to shine. Perfectly at home in their unique space the play was so well directed that you hardly noticed it had been directed at all. The simple set and expertly handled lighting and sound added a professional veneer to the production. So, looking for your next play? If you want a long play with a small cast dealing with serious subject matter then this is it. If not, then step back and applaud the redoubtable Gainsborough Theatre Company.

LADIES IN RETIREMENT

Presented by: **LOUTH PLAYGOERS**
Director: Brian Cliffe

The first rate set fronted by an excellent representation of marshland set the scene wonderfully well for this thriller. Sue Soper and Di Flower {Louisa and Emily}; Linda Goodman-Powell as Leonora Fiske; Catherine West as the maid, Lucy; Simon Kettle as the ne-er do well nephew, Albert and Sue Young in the smaller role as Sister Teresa all played their parts superbly well. Margaret Blackmore was masterly as the scheming murderess, Ellen Creed. Full marks to the technical team for really dramatic use of lighting and sound effects. All the props team need a mention, for their excellent attention to details. This was a most enjoyable production. Well done.

THE DRESSER

Presented by: **RETFORD LITTLE THEATRE**
Director: Simon Cox

Full marks to those responsible for the construction and decoration of the superb set and also to the stage crew on their efficiency. The lighting and sound effects were in good hands, too. Stephen Walker in the title role was excellent bringing just the right blend of subservience and truculence to the part with Lesley Warburton {Her Ladyship} and Donna Marie Donnelly as Irene providing very strong support. Mike Nixon's portrayal of Sir, a character who fears failure, whose memory is spasmodic and who has a monumental ego, was masterly. The minor roles were fine. This was excellent theatre where it would be difficult to find fault.

THE LAST OF THE FOOD CHAIN

Presented by: **HORNCastle THEATRE COMPANY**
Director: Shirley Moffat assisted by Pam Whalley

This was a new play to me, and most interesting it was, too. Five young men work together in one part of a warehouse and relieve the tedium they devise a number of games using the products available. For example there's frozen sprouts tag and throwing the flan case discus-style. When a young woman joins the workforce they try a murder/mystery format, and that is where the mood changes. All five of the chaps played their respective characters well and Becky Bradley was confident and easy in her role as Debbie. Possibly first Night nerves caused some lines to be delivered too quickly at times making it difficult to follow the dialogue. The set consisted of ranges of metal storage shelves packed with assorted large cartons of Produce. All the technical aspects were fine and the costumes were appropriate. An absorbing play.

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

Presented by: **SKEGNESS MUSICAL THEATRE COMPANY**

Director and Choreographer: Andrea Hall

Musical Director: Peter Coughtrey-Wellsted

As a fan of traditional G and S, the Broadway-style version of this operetta came as a culture-shock. I must say, however, that the audacity and pace of the show completely wowed the audience. Thankfully, in the main, Sullivan's lovely music had not been adulterated and we were able to enjoy the dulcet tones of Sandra Colman {Ruth} and Clare Allen as Mabel along with a trio of young ladies and the winsome ladies' chorus. Not to be outdone, Trevor Fenton {Frederic} and Nigel Bowes {Samuel} were very strong vocally leaving Jon Russell {Major General}, Paul Johnson {Police Sergeant} and Doug Smith as the outrageous Pirate King responsible for the bulk of the comedy with the men's chorus giving excellent support. The orchestra's input was most valuable. The set was attractive, the costumes were stunning and the special effects and lighting were productive. Highly entertaining!

GILBERT AND SULLIVAN EXTRAVAGANZA

Presented by: **GENERALLY G AND S, RETFORD.**

Director and Musical Director: Martin Yates

A number of the choir took it in turns to unite the various musical items in the concert. These featured numbers from fourteen different operettas. Most of these were well-known but a couple of unfamiliar tunes from Haddon Hall were the haunting Queen of the Roses, sung by Margaret Doherty and a madrigal sung by a trio. I particularly enjoyed Angie Mitchell's rendition of When Maiden Loves {Yeomen}, an ensemble singing When the Foeman Bears his Steel {Pirates of Penzance}, a short selection from Iolanthe and John Britton's whimsical Dr Daly's Song from The Sorcerer. The evening concluded with spirited singing of Once More Gondoliers. Throughout the evening Martin Yates accompanied the songs and also played the overture to HMS Pinafore as a piano solo. Later he and John Sellers performed a piano duet: The Overture to Patience. A most entertaining evening with excellent singing from start to finish.

42ND STREET

Presented by: **NEWARK AOS**

Director and Choreographer: Lisa Lee

Musical Director: Hugh Casterton

This was a most impressive and enjoyable production. An excellent line-up of principals had Justine Lee as Peggy. Not only was she strong vocally but her acting and dancing were excellent. Georgina Tagg {Dorothy Brock} and Jean Robinson as Maggie Jones were very pleasing. The girls in the chorus and those who had minor roles gave good all-round support. The same was true of the men with David Taylor {Julian Marsh}, Chris Wright {Billy} and Matthew Shephardson {Andy Lee} being particularly noteworthy. Mike Follen's cameo as Pat Denning was good and Tony Roberts was a credible Abner Dillon. Only occasionally too loud, probably through over-enthusiasm, the orchestra's input was good. The costumes were delightful, the set was good and the lighting was fine. Highly entertaining!

THE PRODUCERS

(Review by Peter Breach)

Presented by: **LINCOLN AODS**

Director: Lyndon Warnsby

Musical Director: David Williams

Choreographer: Lisa Lee

In brief, the storyline is of a partnership between a larger than life producer and a shy retiring accountant who collude to make money out of staging a show that is destined to flop but goes on to receive acclaim as a huge success, despite the fact that much of the focus is on the taboo subjects of racism and the mocking of homosexuals. The director of this production, Lyndon Warnsby is to be commended for his casting, he certainly had the right people in the principal roles. Chris Hayes as Max Bialystock, Christian Norton as Leo Bloom, Sally Bean as Ulla and Peter Merrick as Franz Liebkind gave excellent performances and were most ably supported by the other members of the cast. The orchestra, under the baton of David Williams, did a superb job in providing the music, particularly when it came to the dance-routines, the pace was kept and the dancers were able to execute the wonderfully well-choreographed numbers devised by Lisa Lee. The lighting, good make-up and colourful costumes all contributed to make this a most enjoyable evening at the Theatre Royal, Lincoln, despite some minor set problems.

PERFECT PITCH

Presented by: **LOUTH PLAYGOERS**

Director: Clive Nock

John Godber's plays show his close observance of people's frailties. I must admit that I dislike hearing 'earthy' language but I appreciate there are many who do not find it offensive. Having said that, all four characters occupying caravans on two adjacent pitches were extremely well portrayed with high standards of acting all round. Jane bRiggs and Andrew Evans were Yvonne and Ron who were novices in the world of caravanning while Nancy Byrne and Jonathan Cooke were Steph and Grant; old hands at it. I hesitate to use the term 'class' but the couples were as different as chalk and cheese. Or were they? As the plot unfolded you saw very different aspects of their characters. The set was excellent with great attention to details. As a caravanner myself I would notice any shortcomings. The technical aspects were good and so were the costumes. Very entertaining.

NITS JOINS THE SECRET SERVICE

Presented by: **TENNYSON PLAYERS**

Director: Carolyn Drury

For their 2009 experience of Nearly Instant Theatre Sessions the Mablethorpe youngsters, aged between 7 and 17, entered the exciting world of James Bond. Around 60 took part, having worked for four days in five groups, each with an enthusiastic leader, and on the fifth day giving a couple of performances for family and friends. Carolyn's script gave plenty of scope for singing, acting and movement. The resulting show had plenty of variety, masses of appeal and loads of inventiveness.

The dance routines were delightful. Tradition has it that the audience must join in with one of these. We did! This annual event, sponsored by Lincs. Community Development gives the youngsters an opportunity to perform on stage, to maintain the essential self discipline and discover the joy of being part of the show. Very pleasing.

'ALLO 'ALLO

Presented by: **SKEGNESS ARTS GROUP ENTERTAINERS**

Director: David Fisher

Cral Lawrence played the taxing role of Rene wonderfully well. Pete Evans {Bertorelli}, Bert Crane {Crabtree} and Ken Blankley as Lieut. Gruber all gave notable performances. So too, did Edmena Holland as Edith, Rene's wife, along with Karry Parkinson {Michelle} and Clare Allen {Helga}. The rest of the cast was strong in support. Due to last minute illness, Herr Flick was played by the Director. He did well. The Embassy's large stage meant judicious use of its space and an excellent lighting plot meant there were few stage management problems. The costumes were excellent. There was plenty of humour in this play. Very enjoyable.

THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ

Presented by: **HORNCASTLE CENTRE STAGERS**

Directors: Wendy Ireland and Chris Byrne

Michele Vacca's version of the play was ideal for this group of 11 to 13 year olds. The set was fairly simple and used Peter Swift's superb backcloths for depth; the costumes were delightful and the lighting and sound effects added much to the production. Molly Elvin was very sound as Dorothy, the Munchkins delivered their lines clearly and all the main characters played their parts with aplomb. Glinda{the good fairy} and the Wicked Witch of the West contrasted well; Hattie Head was the amiable Lion; Edward Hunter {Tin Man} was good and Ruthie Avison enjoyed her role as the Scarecrow. The rest of the youngsters showed good discipline and made an excellent contribution. This was a most enjoyable, charming performance. Well done.

CONFUSIONS

Presented by: **LINDSEY RURAL PLAYERS**

Director: Maurice Raphael

This Ayckbourn offering features five playlets each linked to the next by a character of a relationship. It provided an excellent evening's entertainment with fine acting from all concerned. The first had a rather 'dippy' mother who treated her neighbours like small children. Gosforth's Fete was farcically funny needing excellent timing from the five players involved. The final tale had five characters who were determined to talk about their respective problems. The other two episodes further showed the playwright's facility for 'people watching'. The set design was impressive with superb scene changing being effected by members of the cast. However, care needs to be taken with sight lines. The lighting was good and the sound effects were particularly good. The costumes throughout were very suitable. Very pleasing.

42ND STREET,

Presented by: **GAINSBOROUGH AOS**
Director: Greg Snape
Musical Director: Gerard Mooney
Choreographer: Brent Grantham-Rae

Snappy tap routines, spirited, tuneful singing and efficient scene-changes were the order of the day. Jose Bruce's portrayal of Dorothy Brock was exceptionally good, Sarah Norvock had the right attributes for her role as Peggy and Lindsey Pepper was ideally cast as Julian Marsh. Tony Graves' cameo as Abner Dillon was notable, too. The rest of the named characters and chorus performed well. The different scenes were achieved via a number of excellent cloths plus small items of furniture making the continuity very slick. The 'Pretty Lady' costumes were delightfully colourful while the rest were eminently suitable. The orchestra dealt well with Harry Warren's exciting score. A most entertaining production.

HELLO, DOLLY!

Presented by: **RETFORD AOS**
Director; Paul Caputa
Musical Director: Martin Yates
Choreography: Betty Teanby with Adele Beaumont

The costumes for this popular musical were excellent. Congratulations to the choreographers. The Waiters' Gallop, by a team of agile young chaps, was especially exciting. The two main leads, Dave Cavell {Vandergelder} and Liz Williams in the title role, were very impressive. The more youthful foursome of Cornelius, Mrs Molloy, Barnaby and Minnie Fay worked well together and so did the woeful Ernestina and her would-be-suitor Ambrose. Chorus participation and that of the rest of the principals was pleasing and it was good to see several children in the company, too. The set was quite good with the stage hands effecting scene-changes efficiently. The lighting was interesting and dramatic. The musical accompaniment was good with occasional over-enthusiasm. Most entertaining.

DEAD GUILTY

Presented by: **RETFORD LITTLE THEATRE**
Director: Lesley Warburton

The set for this Richard Harris thriller was excellent with most efficient scene-changes and good support from the technical team. Donnamarie Donnelly could scarcely be faulted as Julia who was injured in a car crash in which a male colleague was killed. Anne and Gary {Stephanie Lee and Nick Clayton} who tried to help and support her, were very sound. Uttering veiled threats and nasty innuendos with increasing malice was how Margaret, the man's widow {Yvonne Round} gradually wore away Julia's confidence. At the same time the young woman was being poisoned with drugs. This was extremely good theatre with the tension gradually mounting until the final moments.

MALADITE'S NIGHT IN

Presented by: **GAINSBOROUGH THEATRE COMPANY**
Director: Jason Browne

We are told that Nathan Hughes wrote the script at the age of nineteen. The situation revolves around some young people who share a house, their burger bar boss and their landlady. Inevitably there are some fallings out.....and some of these get quite rough! Jane brown obviously enjoyed her role as Mrs Busy, the landlady. Vicky Ayris and Anna Warburton contrasted nicely. Matt Tinker {Maladite}, Martyn Horner-Glister {Russ} and Jamie Staton {Russ} all portrayed their roles well while Tony Phillips was a good choice as the slightly more mature Gavin. The set was simple with scene-changes taking place quietly and efficiently. The lighting and sound effects were good and the costumes were fine. An interesting, amusing and somewhat unusual production.

BARNUM

Presented by: Louth playgoers
Directors: Chris Winney and Sue Hamilton
Musical Director: Tony Blackmore
Choreographers: Frances Brindle and Nicky Wright

Mention should first be made of Adrian Ley who demonstrated and taught excellent circus skills for this fast-moving show. Congratulations to those responsible for the superb set and stunning costumes. The stage crews's scene-changing abilities were very competent, too. Karl Brown shone in the title role; his charismatic, irrepressible style was so right., Felicity Haslehurst's more restrained portrayal of his wife, Chairy, was very pleasing. Stuart Vickers was impressive as James Bailey, the Ringmaster. Added to these were more characters and the chorus, all of whom made valuable contributions to the show. The orchestra's accompaniment was enthusiastic and tuneful. I particularly enjoyed 'The Colours of my Life', 'Come Follow the Band' and 'Black and White'. A most entertaining evening.

AN EVENING OF ENTERTAINMENT

Presented by: **LINDSEY RURAL PLAYERS**

Produced by: Charlotte Broughton

The nicely varied programme commenced with the Youth Theatre's production of Hopeless Hamlet, a most amusing piece. We heard a couple of piano solos from Mike Boltz and saw a short sketch about a couple of women at a Turkish Bath. Melissa Horton's rendition of Rose among the Heather was lovely; so, too, were Warning recited by Rosie Beale and Toya's Story performed by Clare Richardson. Yours, Always, a selection of wartime songs and love letters between a husband and wife during World War 2 was very poignant. David Lintin performed Act 1, Scene 1, from Richard the Third extremely well. The evening concluded with a Victorian melodrama, Temptation Sordid or Virtue Rewarded, which was highly entertaining.

Well done.

THE ACCRINGTON PALS

Presented by: **HORNCastle THEATRE COMPANY**

Director: Vicki Head

Excellent use was made of the limited space afforded by the Lion Theatre together with an efficient lighting plot and realistic sound effects. Efficient stage management meant slick continuity was ensured. An authentic array of suitable props, furnishings and militaria was used to complete the scenes. Sheena Liversidge gave an impressive performance as May Hassal. So, too, did Wendy Ireland as Annie Boggis and young Will Hunter as her son, Reggie. The Accrington Pals who went off to war and failed to return were equally powerful and moving in their portrayals. Jon Cooke's CSM Rivers was good. Welcome comic relief tended to come via the young women who were left at home. This proved to be a thought-provoking drama where one could not fail to be moved. Good theatre.

INSPECTOR DRAKE AND THE PERFECT CRIME

Presented by: **SAXILBY DRAMA CIRCLE**

Director: Bob Anscombe

David Tristram's farcical comedy features a woefully inept policeman, PC Plod. One mishap after another befalls him before the Inspector finally solves the mystery. Ian Atkinson as the policeman and Adrian Pick {Inspector Drake} exacted every nuance of comedy from the puns and doubles entendres. Their antics were hilariously funny. Also included in the mayhem were Mike Gibbs {Dr Rupert Short}, Susan Thorpe as Sabrina and Janet Pick {Miss Short} all of whom played their respective roles with energy and guile. The set was very well-constructed and decorated. The sound effects were great and the lighting was dramatic. Apart from a few prompts there was little to criticise in this production.

HAGON HIGHLIGHTS CONCERT

Presented by: **HAGON HAPPENINGS THEATRE COMPANY**

Director: Pat Hagon

Musical Director: Richard Hagon

The company comprises players from Surrey and also the Lincoln area. On this occasion, items were chosen from six of Pat and Richard Hagon's original works. Pat wrote the lyrics and scripts and her son Richard was responsible for composing the music. They have been co-operating in this way for over twenty years. The content of this programme was nicely varied from The Agony in the Garden from The Evangelists and a stately pavane and the song Bluff King Hal from Tudor Times to a trio of numbers from Little Women and several songs from In the Shadow of Pendle Hill. The harmony in Old Pendle was particularly stirring. The programme concluded with The Wedding {Little Women}. Suitably costumes throughout with the stage nicely dressed this was a truly diverting afternoon's entertainment

THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD

Presented by: **LINDUM LIGHT OPERA COMPANY**

Director: Tony Smith

Musical Director: David Williams

Choreographer: Lisa Lee

This brand new group, based in Lincoln, was formed principally to stage a G and S show to celebrate the 90th birthday of NODA Past President, Kay Darbyshire. This inaugural production was exciting, musically sound and innovative. Without exception, all the main characters played their respective parts wonderfully well. Those with minor roles and the chorus were equally pleasing. The technical aspects were in capable hands, the costumes were delightful, movement around the stage was good and the orchestra's accompaniment was excellent. The set was good and the props were well chosen. There was plenty of vital teamwork connected with this remarkable production; a great birthday treat for Kay. Congratulations.

BE MY BABY

Presented by: **RETFORD LITTLE THEATRE YOUTH GROUP**
Director: Heather Carroll

In addition to directing this interesting play, Heather Carroll played the part of the matron of a home in 1964 for unmarried mothers and their babies. The only other older woman was Mrs Adams, played by Vanessa Cookson. These two ladies typified the straitlaced attitudes back then. All four of the young mothers-to-be portrayed their parts extremely well. Becky Beach {Mary} and Sabrina Sooriah {Queenie} were the two girls who featured most in the action and both achieved high standards of acting ability. The other two, Alicia Ferriter {Dolores} and Carlotte Hall{Norma} were convincing in their roles, too. The set, of the room shared by Mary and Queenie, was suitably austere, and the girls' maternity uniforms looked right. The lighting and sound effects were good. Yet another thought-provoking production. Well done.

61ST ANNUAL SKEGNESS PLAY FESTIVAL

PRESENTED BY SKEGNESS PLAYGOERS

This year there were five full length plays in addition to three one-act plays. Of these, Ladies Day {St Nicolas Players Spalding}, The Accrington Pals{Horncastle Theatre Company} and the melodrama Temptation Sordid or Virtue Rewarded {one act play by Lindsey Rural Players} have all been reviewed previously.

Home, presented by Halifax Thespians, featured five individuals who were found to have different mental health problems. This was a thought-provoking production with much to applaud.

Next are reviews for The Small Hours, Skegness Playgoers; Still Life, Boston Playgoers and The Last Bread Pudding {Skegness Playgoers}

THE SMALL HOURS

Presented by: **SKEGNESS PLAYGOERS**
Director: Sue Sharman

Francis Durbridge thrillers never fail to provide plenty of intrigue. The set was mainly of a very tasteful sitting room. The lighting was good, and so on the whole were the sound effects. The costumes were suitable for 1991 when the play was set. All the members of the cast played their parts well. Sharon Harris {Vanessa Houston}, Graham Payne {Oliver Radford and Kristian Hardiman as the young go-ahead chef, Bernard, all deserve special mention. A number of prompts tended to slow down the momentum but this was a worthy production.

STILL LIFE

Presented by: **BOSTON PLAYGOERS**
Director: Paul Gibson

The stage version of Brief Encounter was their choice of one-act play. All eleven characters played their parts well. Melissa Marlow{Laura} and Danny Chester-Bush {Alec} were extremely well cast as the travellers who met by accident in the railway refreshment room. Glyn Ruskin's Myrtle, in charge of the buffet stall with Rachel Rowett as Beryl, her young assistant, were really notable. So, too, were Jon Molson as Albert and Trevor Fenton as Stanley. Liz Worster's garrulous Doll Messiter was great. The set was good with reasonably authentic props; the lighting and sound effects were fine and the costumes were excellent.

THE LAST BREAD PUDDING

Presented by: **SKEGNESS PLAYGOERS**
Director: Ken Blankley

Six people are attending the Drama Society's committee meeting to discuss the merits of Jan's play. Inevitably they cannot agree on its worth with several different viewpoints being proffered. Carl Lawrence{Ken}, Margaret Jarvis as the flamboyant Fleur, Sarah Quimby{Phyllis the secretary} and Jon Russell as Jack....all these were highly suited to their roles. Jenny Blankney clearly relished her ascerbic lines as Denise while Steve Gower played his tramp's part with vigour. Throughout the mayhem was the playwright, played by Nichola Bostok as she valiantly tried to justify the original plot. The result was very funny.

The Adjudicator this year was Colin Dolley. His comments were concise, very fair and wholly constructive.

Practically every production received at least one trophy. Horncastle Theatre Company took the Premier Award with Halifax Thespians the runners up.

SUMMER NIGHTS WITH PENFOLD

Presented by: **PENFOLD PLAYERS**

Three very different productions by Young Penfold, Older Penfold and the 18 to 30 In-beTweenies commenced with a Rock'n'Roll musical {Shake Ripple and Roll} by the youngest members. Directed by Chris Hayes, and set in an American icecream parlour, it had pace, energetic dance routines and spirited singing with the whole cast being fully involved with the action. James Andrews {Joey Nobody}, Daniel Terry {Dirk Manley}, Helen Blackburn {Mrs Cohen} and Joe Rose as Chuck all were particularly notable.

Next came Shop for Charity by the Adult Penfold Players. Directed by Graham Ashley, the set was of a charity shop staffed by four ladies with very differing natures. All played their parts extremely well. Equally convincing was Mr Galbraith, a local vagrant, who visited the shop regularly and quoted freely from the Bible in his conversations with the staff. The result was highly amusing.

Finally came an original offering from the In-beTweenies called Nudge Nudge Wink Wink. This had an excellent lighting plot highlighting as necessary four young women using social websites to communicate with each other. Also included in the set-up were an extremely camp young man and another chap who was something of a handyman. Directed by Toni Hoenes and Claire Green, this home-written play was riotously funny.

All these plays needed quite complicated sets with masses of props; all were first rate.
Congratulations on a most entertaining evening.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE HORRIBLE HAUNTING OF HORNCastle

Presented by: **HORNCastle YOUNG STAGERS**

Director: Sheena Liversidge with Gail Hinkins and Becky Bradley

Musical Director and Effects: Chris Hinkins

Written by a Horncastle Theatre Company member, this charming tale told the story of how Robin Hood enlisted the help of screen heroes like James Bond and Dr Who against the dastardly Sheriff of Nottingham. There were also three hags reminiscent of those in the Scottish play. The script had many references to local people and locations; the double entendres and puns made this a most amusing and entertaining production. It was ideal for the young pre-teenagers taking part. Lines were delivered clearly and the songs were sung with vigor. All the children did well with Robin Hood, Prioress Agnes, Lady Marion and the Sheriff being especially noteworthy. The technical aspects were excellent; the set and costumes were great. Well Done.

WEST SIDE STORY

Presented by: **THE MOB** (Retford AOS Youth Group)

Director: Liz Williams

Musical Director: Paul O'Leary

Choreographer: Betty Teanby

Full marks to the production team on this lively, thought provoking musical. My only criticisms are that the accompaniment was too loud much of the time and the direction occasionally lacked clarity. Congratulations to those playing Tony, Maria, Anita, Bernardo and Riff. All these teenagers gave outstanding portrayals with first rate support from the rest of the cast. The dance / movement routines were delightful. A bouquet for Carolyn White who was responsible for creating the costumes and a hearty pat on the back for Tony Williams who's use of scaffolding for his ingenious set was excellent. Highly entertaining.

THE PROMS AT THE BROADBENT

Presented by: **THE BROADBENT SINGERS**

Director: Abigail Wright

Musical Director: Jan Allen

The Broadbent Singers are part of Lindsey Rural Players. Their summer concerts program was delightfully varied and hugely enjoyed by the audience. In the first half Earl Rodgers' arrangement of Country Garden was one chorus number which contrasted enormously with Rhythm of life (Sweet Charity). Traditional songs were pleasing and so was the amusing duet. Of Catto Buffo di Due Cats. The rendition of Silver Bird by a trio of young ladies was lovely. The second half featured several G&S songs, a couple of Flanders and Swann numbers, Gershwin's haunting Summer Time and Holt's Song of the Ship Builders. The rousing finale (Where the audience joined in lustily) was of the usual Proms last night music. A Most enjoyable evening with excellent accompaniment from the musicians.

KINDLY LEAVE THE STAGE

Presented by: **HORNCastle OLD STAGERS**

Director: Priscilla Danby

Let down at short notice, a pivotal part was played (With Script in Hand) by the director. She did well, not only with that, but her direction of this comedy was very good. Basically it had six actors taking part in a play about the breakup of a marriage. Soon the atmosphere changes when personal issues come to the fore. We also met the plays prompt and a St John's Ambulance Nurse. All the players portrayed their respective characters very well. Peter Glanfield's older and increasingly more inebriated Edward was a fine cameo with all his past Shakespearean roles being recalled. There were some pithy, amusing "one liners" from the actors.... and plenty of hilarity from the audience. The set was good with excellent props and lighting. Well Done.

DISTRICT 5 - LINCOLNSHIRE SOUTH (REVIEWS BY PETER BREACH)

DICK WHITTINGTON

Presented by: **RINGSTONE PLAYERS**

Director: Astrid Rix

The experienced principals were well cast and all gave creditable performances. The chorus were confident in their routines and very much looked as if they were enjoying themselves; a regal performance by King Rat helped inspire his young pack to produce plenty of very rat-like scurrying. Cheryl Anderson and Amy Morrish played two glamorous roles essential to a pantomime story, whilst Karen Berry and Rachael Hart as the hopeless sailors were very funny. Jake Wilson and David Moisey were good guardsmen and Melissa Aicken moved most gracefully as a lady cat, partnered purr-fectly by Tommy! Alice Holtom, stepping in at the eleventh hour, acquitted herself extremely well as the Emperor. Clever choreography and music by Kate Stokes added much to this production, which was supported by a hard working stage crew and technical team.

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

Presented by: **CROWLAND A.D.S.**

Producers: Jayne Munton & Carole Parnell

Musical Director: Anthony Storey

This was C.A.D.S thirtieth pantomime and they appear to have established a reputation that ensures they attract numerous people to participate. They had a large stage to fill and it really was an achievement to produce a show with a cast of this size. I was particularly impressed with the chorus of over thirty young people who worked with much energy and enthusiasm in support of the principals and demonstrated discipline when making their entrances and exits. The principals all gave strong performances and there must be several societies that wish they had so many committed young people to choose from. The colourful costumes, scenery, make-up, lighting and special effects all added to the quality of this first class family entertainment. Well done all concerned!

BEING OF SOUND MIND

Presented by: **BOSTON PLAYGOERS**

Directors: Liz Worsley & Mike Sheridan Shinn

I found this to be a really fascinating play about obsession, betrayal and greed, acted out by a cast who all acquitted themselves competently and convincingly on a set that had received much attention to detail. I was very impressed with the pump over the kitchen sink that produced flowing water and the flame effect of the stove when lit. A well-organised stage crew who even remembered to alter the clock ably supported the players. The partnership between Liz and Mike proved very effective with their combined direction producing some well-developed characters and precisely executed moves on stage. This was riveting stuff with the many twists in the plot keeping the audience guessing; an inspired choice of play that provided good entertainment.

LADIES' DAY

Presented by: **ST NICOLAS PLAYGOERS**
Director: Philip Bosworth

Even when the information comes straight from the horse's mouth there's no guarantee that a dead cert will turn out to be a winner, but there was no doubting the audience acclaim for the latest offering from St Nicolas Players. The play, written by Amanda Whittington, is about four women who work as fish packers in Hull, who decide on the spur of the moment to visit the Royal Ascot Meeting on the occasion of its being transferred to York. This work, which contains both humour and pathos in abundance, was superbly cast with the four main parts being extremely well played by Arline Evenden, Jackie Stone, Cathy Mellor and Samantha Hunt with excellent support from male members of the company. The incidental music was most appropriate and full marks to Gina Edwards for her innovatively choreographed routine, during which we saw the women transform themselves from their work wear into their finery. The sets were well designed and the lighting really complimented the action on stage. Congratulations to all who were involved in this first class production.

SURPRISE PACKAGE

Presented by: **LANGTOFT PLAYERS**
Director: Andrew Clingo

Included in the programme for this production was a message from the Chairman, Allan Boon, inviting the audience "to enjoy a few laughs along the way" and they certainly did that. This was a very good choice of play, which examines a family's relationships whilst on a package holiday in Formentera. All the cast worked hard and were very successful at getting into character. Robbie Logue and Rosie King, acting as hotel staff, deserve credit for mastering the Spanish language. Allan Boon's hilarious antics and expressions went down well with the audience but failed to amuse Janet Farrer, his hard to please wife. Anne Fensom was an excellent choice as the mother-in law, dominating her unmarried daughter played by Jean Hawksworth, who developed a crush on German tourist Michael Moir, as did Jackie Dodds, playing a widow on the prowl. Robert Anderson and Aime Walker made good use of facial expressions and body language to play the young lovers. Well-chosen incidental music and costumes also added to the appeal of this show.

JANE EYRE

Presented by: **SLEAFORD LITTLE THEATRE**
Director: Sue Robey

This was an excellent adaptation of Charlotte Bronte's novel by Sue Robey, a member of Sleaford Little Theatre, who also directed the production in which her fine talent was clearly demonstrated, as was the competency of the well-chosen cast. The young people were very good, particularly Anna Albuixech, who as young Jane and then as Rochester's French Ward acquitted herself with distinction. Karen Davey, as Jane, was very convincing in her portrayal of a young woman having to face life's trials and tribulations alone. The realistic sets, great costumes and clever use of lighting and sound effects all contributed to significantly enhancing this marvellous production. This was a great team effort, which resulted in a splendid evening's entertainment. Well done!

OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR

Presented by: **GRANTHAM OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Director: Martin Berry
Musical Director: Paul O'Leary

Joan Littlewood's satirical musical was the choice of Grantham Operatic Society for its spring production. It is the story of the Great War performed in the style of a Pierrot show. The colourful costumes worn throughout the performance helped underscore the ridiculousness of much that went on during the conflict. Very good voice projection ensured the story line remained clear to the audience and there were great sound and lighting effects. Excellent stage and musical direction provided a good balance between the actors and the music. Thank you to the Society for being prepared to step outside your comfort zone; your audience and I really appreciated this moving performance.

SHOWBOAT

Presented by: **BOSTON OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Director: Marilyn Bradley Cobb
Co Director: Rachel Pick
Musical Director: Lynne Baker

The clever set design and a very efficient stage crew did much to make it appear that in this story of travelling show folk they were actually travelling. Also, great attention had been given to the detail of the costumes, even down to the footwear. There was much movement on stage from this cast of all ages to give the impression that they were living their parts. Excellent performances from Jon Molson, Marilyn Read, Jennifer Mills, Stephen Bromby, Paul Argyle, Glyn Ruskin, Kate Eglinton, David Edgar, Danny Chester-Bush and Sheila Millington as principals were well supported by other members of the large cast. The fine musical accompaniment to the rendition of songs such as "Ol' Man River", "Can't Help Lovin' That Man Of Mine" and "Bill" helped to explain just why this show remains a favourite of so many.

HELLO DOLLY

Presented by: **STAMFORD AMS**
Director: Tommy Laughton
Musical Director: Roger Loose

This was a lively and colourful performance with spectacular costumes and a chorus that really looked as if they were enjoying themselves. Judie Mackie as Dolly Levi, the woman who meddles, played her part with exuberance and was well partnered by Adrian Worgan as the self-important Horace Vandergelder, the target of her attentions. The antics of Andrew Cleaver and George Brett, the subjugated shop assistants determined to see more of life (particularly their involvement with Joanne Henderson and Sarah Owen) showed good direction. Overall, this was a very entertaining production with a fine balance of sound between singers and orchestra. The choreography by Martyne Miller was excellent and the stage crew very efficient. Well done all concerned!

ARE YOU BEING SERVED?

Presented by: **GRANTHAM DRAMATIC SOCIETY**
Director: Mary O'Neill

Grantham Dramatic Society chose the stage version of this popular TV sitcom for their May production and from the moment of 'curtain-up' set about entertaining their audience with energy and enthusiasm. All the cast were quickly into character and delivered their lines clearly. The clever set designs afforded an abundance of farcical activity both in the store and at the holiday destination and the quiet efficiency of the stage crew enabled the pace to be kept up. The excellent costumes contributed greatly to setting the time period and people like me were prompted to ask ourselves the question, "Did we really wear outfits like those"? This production was well cast and there were fine performances from Mark Brown, Mike Toon, John Sheppard, Kevin O'Neill, Chris Dakin, Gill Wood and Ann Topps. The answer to the question posed in the title must be a resounding, "Yes, we were served much that made us laugh".

GUYS AND DOLLS

(Review by Anne Key-Huckerby)

Presented by: **SPALDING ADOS**
Director: Paul Coleman
Musical Director: Craig Delaney
Orchestral M.D.: Christine Evans
Choreographer: Gemma Page

Those responsible for the innovatively superb set did a wonderful job. It was the best Home-produced one I have seen in ages. All the chief male characters played their parts extremely well. Vocally strong, charismatic Darran Bland was a good choice as Sky Masterson. Trish Burgess {Sarah} and Sharon Barker {Miss Adelaide} contrasted very well; each maintained her persona admirably. I liked Gordon Sellars' sympathetic rendition of 'More I Cannot Wish You' very much. The rest of the named characters and chorus gave sound support. The dance routines by the Hot Box Girls and the Crap Shooters' Ballet were entertaining. On the whole the costumes were fine. The orchestra's accompaniment was good. A really enjoyable evening!

STILL LIFE

Presented by: **BOSTON PLAYGOERS**
Director: Paul Gibson

This stage play, which is a detailed account of the passion and pain that can occur when people discover love, was part of Noel Coward's 1936 ten play cycle, later in 1945 to become the very successful film entitled "Brief Encounter". Boston Playgoers maintained their reputation, producing a well-designed and constructed set with much attention being given to detail. Good lighting and sound effects created a realistic railway atmosphere from the days of steam locomotives. Excellent costumes and very good diction from all the players helped capture the period. I was particularly impressed with the performances of Melissa Marlowe and Daniel Chester-Bush as the ill-fated lovers, Peter Kay as the ever compassionate husband and Glyn Ruskin, Rachel Rowett and Jon Molson who played the station staff.

MURDER IN PLAY

Presented by: **RINGSTONE PLAYERS**

Director: Dave Moisey

There were very creditable and convincing performances in this stage thriller from a cast that all came under suspicion of being responsible for the heinous crime perpetrated during the rehearsal of a play. This production contained much to entertain, particularly the barbed exchanges between Renee (Astrid Rix) and Christa (Karen Holtom), the facial expressions of Tim (Nick Willerton), the naivety of GINETTE (Amy Morrish), the incompetence of Harrison (David Moisey), the problems heaped on beleaguered Pat (Cheryl Anderson), the astuteness of Sophie (Kelly Winterton) and the brashness of Boris (Nigel Kuhn). The players made good use of the stage space and the hall, the costumes were well chosen and the set appropriate. It was also most amusing to listen to the deliberations of members of the audience during the interval as they devoured their ploughman's meal and attempted to substantiate their claims to knowing the identity of the murderer.

HOLKA POLKA

Presented by: **BOSTON CHILDREN'S THEATRE**

Director: Phil Landshoft

This was an excellent choice of play for the group; it was particularly well cast and the production presented the young people involved with some splendid opportunities to display their talents, which they did with much dedication and enthusiasm. The backdrops, sound effects and lighting created the appropriate environments for the activities taking place on stage and the colourful costumes were well chosen. The props, specially the model pigs that had been made by members of the cast, were very good. I was particularly impressed with the manner in which the players supported each other, evidencing a strong team spirit in the group. There were outstanding performances from Megan Beaumont as Brenda, Georgia Wright as the Wolf, Katie Frost as Cindy, Ope Sowande as Humpty, Polly and Saffron Summerfield as Ezi and Dezi, Imogen Bushell as Fairy Godmother, Sam Sharkey as Pinocchio and Edward Proctor as the Prince.

DISTRICT 6 - LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND (REVIEWS BY ZOE CLARKE)

42ND STREET

Presented by: **CHRISTCHURCH THEATRE CLUB**

Director: John Lewin

Musical Director: Vicki Hing

Choreography: Ruth Chadwick and Michael Gamble

There's only one society that can be relied on to deliver the goods with this non-stop dancing frenzy, and that's Christchurch. The whole company never stopped moving, rising to the challenges set by co-choreographers Ruth and Michael. Consistently good as ever were Julie Easter, Anja Zeman and Lucy Brown playing the parts of Dorothy Brock, Peggy Sawyer and Annie Riley respectively. Matching them tap for tap were Carl Unwin as Bert Barry, Darryl Clarke as Andy Lee and Michael Gamble as Billy Lawler. Perfectly supporting the routines were stunning costumes and wigs.

Once again a great evening's entertainment, well done to everyone.

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE

Presented By: **THE FALCON PLAYERS**

Director: Norman Hockley

Producer: Andy Holt

If I only reviewed this society for the warmth of their welcome, it would be worth it, but when presented with a treat such as this, it's doubly worth attending. I've had to get through the odd quick change in my time but this was a 3-hander play, which relied on the speed, slick and quick wittedness of all three performers.

Alan Whiteland and Cathy Rackstraw gave impressive performances but it was the many varied characters and accents of Lawrence Holmes that held my interest all the way through, making me howl with laughter at times. The play was expertly directed by Norman Hockley, with clever use of moving boxes and chairs. Well done to everyone. Let's hope your enforced break isn't for too long.

CINDERELLA

Presented by: **THE PANTOMIME COMPANY**
Director: John Hill
Musical Director: Mick Curtis
Choreography: Carol Lacey

Musical Arrangements and Productions: Steve Sanders

Packed full of Concordia stalwarts, Cinderella has to be the best-loved Panto of all time. As ever the set and costumes are to the expected high standards being created by theatre technicians and John Hill respectively. Carol Lacey's dance routines were well drilled by seniors and juniors alike. Making his debut but excellently filling his stilettos was Matt Wilson who joined Phil Bevington as Cinderella's stepsisters. Bringing a tear to most of the audience and closing Act 1 was Cinderella's Flying Coach which was stunning and worth of any professional stage.

COLLABORATIONS

Presented by: **MARKET HARBOROUGH MUSICAL THEATRE**
Director: Rachel Compton/Mike Saggars
Musical Director: Richard James
Choreographer: Daryl Handy

With some last minute content changes due to ill health, the programme was none-the-less an eclectic and refreshing one. With both Directors choosing to sing, there were some strong performances from Rachel Compton. Also of note and taking on demanding numbers from Wicked was Kate-Rose Parker. Showing promise was Jaz Cox although the "laid-back" delivery was a little grating by the end of the evening, coming over more as affectation rather than signature style.

With something for everyone, Collaborations kept both company and audience members alike, entertained.

HELLO DOLLY

Presented By: **CHRISTCHURCH THEATRE COMPANY**
Director: John Lewin
Musical Director: Vicki Hing
Choreography: Michael Gamble

Once again Christchurch's male chorus proved to be the envy of any amateur society and would have looked at home on most pro-stages. Michael Gamble's Waiter's Gallop and ensemble Put on Your Sunday Clothes routines appeared effortless and fantastic. However with such high expectations from the group, this latest offering unfortunately fell short of the mark. Whilst lead roles were on the whole well executed, there were none that stood out.

Looking forward to your 40th Year anniversary celebrations.

KING AND I

Presented By: **LOUGHBOROUGH AOS**
Director/Producer: Andrew Talbot
Musical Director: Derek Hunter
Choreographer: Jeanette Patrick – Cooper

One of the old favourites, this show was popular with cast and audience alike. A tight band under the baton of Derek Hunter, fully supported some fine singing performances, in particular Charlotte Warrington taking the part of Mrs Anna and Jane Stanford as Lady Thiang. At the helm was Roger Clarke playing the part of the King made famous by Yul Brynner. It's always difficult not to draw comparisons and Roger certainly put his own interpretation into the role, but for me, was a little young.

The performances were completed with a great set from Proscenium, although the costumes and wigs (especially those for the children) were a little miss-matched and not true to the period.

Well done to everyone involved, looking forward to your future selection of shows.

OLIVER

Presented by: **THE ASHBEIAN MUSICAL THEATRE GROUP**
Director: David McKnight
Musical Director: Howard Marriott
Choreographer: Deborah Wilson

Whilst always an obvious choice to put bums on seats and give bank accounts a cash injection, choosing to put on a show that has been touched by reality T.V. is a risky decision. For me, many of the part players missed the mark with their characterisations, bringing in mannerisms that were more modern day than Dickensian. However, congratulations must go to Keith Reynolds' portrayal of Fagin and in particular, Charlotte Swarbrick as the best Dodger I've seen in a long time and indeed a very talented young lady. The orchestra were great but overpowered a number of the principals due to their raised exposed position. The set was also impressive and well built. I think it would be fair to say that most time had been devoted to the children, which was evident in their well-executed group numbers, but unfortunately it had a knock on effect to some of the adult performances.

SOUTH PACIFIC

Presented by: **RUTLAND MUSICAL THEATRE**
Director: John Hackett
Musical Director: Martyn Ford
Choreographer: Sally Montague

I'd been promised great things of this company so it was unfortunate that my enjoyment was marred. Proving to be far too intrusive was the noisy sound and lighting box filled with people laughing and chatting. Added to this, South Pacific is one of Rodgers and Hammerstein's longest shows which normally wouldn't be a problem were it not for the most uncomfortable bench seats I've ever experienced! That said, there were some fine performances from Ruth Laverick as Nellie and Richard Hodgson as Cable. Philip Sendall as Emile de Becke had great tone and presence, but the necessary age gap between he and his leading lady was something else bordering on the verge of being uncomfortable. Both the men's and ladies' choruses worked hard and they were fully supported by an excellent orchestra.

STEPPING OUT

(REVIEWED BY CHRIS CLARKE)

Produced by: **THE FESTIVAL PLAYERS**
Director: Christine Moore

A excellent evening's entertainment was enjoyed by the audience with Christine Moore's production of 'Stepping Out'. To single any one character out would be very wrong as the cast were so well balanced, all getting the most out of the script. The set depicted the classical Village Hall and the players were all dressed to match their surroundings. Full marks for the tapping at the end which also included a lot of the moves the audience saw being rehearsed. It's a long time since I have sat in an audience that laughed so much and I look forward to your next production with a change of mood, 'Wait Until Dark', in September.

THE FULL MONTY

Presented by: **LEICESTER AOS**
Director/Choreographer: Greg Pichery
Musical Director: Hugh Casterton

Performing at the new Curve Theatre, Leicester, technical glitches beyond the society's control were evident, but the cast didn't let them interfere with their performance. Standing out for me were Jordan Handford as Malcolm and Craig Thurlow as Ethan with my favourite number being "Big Ass Rock". Also note worthy was "Michael Jordan's Ball" which was well choreographed showing off the talents of all six men. Hugh Casterton's band was one of the tightest and best sounds I've heard in a long time.

THE HIRED MAN

Presented by: **ESNA PLAYERS**
Director: Steve Illidge
Musical Director: Andrew Goff

With so much promise attached to this production I'm pleased to say it delivered on every front. Directed by the excellent Steve Illidge there was clever use of space and stage providing unique entrance and egress even if a little over-crowded at times. Packed full of all my favourite people, the lead characters were all secure in the hands of Emma Adcock, Gareth Wynne, Ollie Thompson and Jeremy Malpas. They were ably supported by many, with Bethan Williams showing particular promise. I loved the clever use of film to show passage of time and subtext and the minimalist set really worked. A great evening's entertainment all round.

THE YEOMAN OF THE GUARD

Presented by: **LEICESTER OPERATIC PLAYERS**
Director: Roberta Morrell
Musical Director: David Toft

I'm pleased to announce I have found a new favourite G+S in Yeoman of the Guard, very much enjoying this production. If you can keep on top of the usual twists and turns, this actually does have more of a substantial story with darker themes and melodies and less of the frippery.

With a vocally sound ensemble, there were some stand out performances from Paul Nicholls as Shadbolt, Ethne Goode as Dame Carruthers, Alexandra Honey as Elsie Maynard and Kimberley Counsell as Phoebe Meryll. Costumes to the usual high standards of Carousel Costumes, Leamington Spa and a truly amazing set topped off the evening.

Unfortunately the programme cannot be entered into the competition, as it doesn't meet the minimum criteria. Please visit the NODA website for guidance.

UP AND RUNNING

Presented by: **THE FALCON PLAYERS**
Director: Alan Whiteland
Producers: Andy Holt and Kathy Phillips

What I like about seeing plays at The Cope is that the most is made of the stage and space available and once again The Falcon Players gave us a fantastic set and working props. As with any farce, the play is reliant on the fast and accurate delivery of lines and unfortunately the many prompts taken, detracted from this. That being said, giving clever and insightful performances were Norman Hockley as Reg Godfrey and Dot Hollins as Kate Summer, whose comic timing, accents and carriage were all spot-on.

CALAMITY JANE

Presented by: **THE MELTON MOWBRAY THEATRE COMPANY**
Producer: Nigel Taylor
Musical Director: Janette Rayson
Choreographer: Rosetha Claxton

Keeping a watchful eye on proceedings and a supporting hand on the baton once more was Janette Rayson, who brought together a great band for the proceedings.

Playing a superb character part was Jack Gamble who gave a young but polished and believable portrayal of Frances Fryer. Especially worthy of mention was Anne Windsor-Houghton, taking on the part of Katie Brown. I was however disappointed at the lack of choreography and slightly shocked to see the whole company standing still to deliver an entire number on more than one occasion, not making best use of the troupe of dancing girls. Conversely, there was a lot of Principal movement, which was unnecessary and awkward. Sadly, this one was a little tired around the edges.

MADAME BUTTERFLY AND THE MIKADO

(Reviewed by Peter Beddall)

Presented by: **CHARNWOOD OPERA**
Producer and Narrator: Lawrence Holmes
Musical Director: Paul Blakemore

This was a great change. Charnwood condensed two beautiful but very different musical works into a most entertaining evening. A simple Japanese setting was used throughout to good effect, with costumes of a very high standard. First came the opera, giving us a balanced and melodious sound without the aid of microphones. The role of Butterfly was beautifully sung by Rachel-Louise Stonehouse, showing excellent control over her vocal register, and she was well partnered by Ian Rogerson. The "Humming Chorus" was also a highlight. Part Two of the evening, The Mikado, had plenty of life and humour. Yum-Yum was very well sung by Clare Proctor, with Lyndon Gardner a good Nanki-Poo, and David Henshaw imposing as The Mikado, with excellent diction, so important to this role. Paul Blakemore was in good control of the music, and Anthony Wilson an excellent accompanist. This was very well received by the audience.

LES MISERABLES

Presented by: **THE MELTON MOWBRAY MUSICAL THEATRE COMPANY YOUTH GROUP**
Producer: Peter Robinson
Musical Director: Sandra Tebbutt
Choreography: Emily Woodcock

This was the first time I have seen a youth group perform Les Mis, and whilst I feel the show sits better with adult performers from a life experience and emotional point of view, this group did the piece justice, presenting some fine performances. For me, the night belonged to the boys with lots of promise being shown by Patrick Hancock as Javert, Ben Maxwell as Valjean, and George Mercer as Enjolras. Keeping up the girls side and demonstrating great comic timing was Chloe Cusition as Madame Thenardier. There were times though when the general pace of things seemed rushed and vocal delivery took precedence over stagecraft and acting. Scenery and props were kept to a minimum but the barricade was very well done. All in all an enjoyable evening with some faces to watch out for in the future.

DISCO INFERNO

(Review by Martin Tailby)

Presented by: **THE TINHATTERS**
Director: Chris Clarke & John Rollings
Musical Director: Tony Rifugiato
Choreographer: Caroline Mogford-Walsh
Venue: Hinckley, The Concordia Theatre
Date: 16 – 21 March 2009

This fun, 1970's compilation show was bursting with energy, some great numbers, Crocodile Rock, this was a great company number showing great enthusiasm. Could it be by Magic, a great Queen number, again the full company did it justice and a very humorous YMCA, to mention but a few. Although the story is very thin the show was extremely well presented and cast, you could not fail to leave in a great mood. The band were great, some good choreography, well costumed and set by the company. We thoroughly enjoyed the show, although not my cup of tea generally. Best wishes for your next production.

MY FAIR LADY

(Review by Martin Tailby)

Presented by: **HINCKLEY CONCORDIA AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Director: Nanette Goodman
Musical Director: Sarah Bright
Choreographer: Lisa Marsh
Venue: Hinckley, The Concordia Theatre
Date: 5 – 16 May 2009

A finely tuned, traditional production of one of the greatest classical musicals and the company certainly did it justice. An excellent cast, Anna Bowtell as Eliza and James Ashfield as Henry were both excellent. The remainder of the cast were well suited to their parts and gave good performances. Nanette's eye for detail shone through as always. Excellent costumes as always from this company, good musical direction, well drilled chorus work, good choreography. All in all a very precise production. Look forward to your next production 'Annie Get Your Gun', another great classical show.

THE LIKES OF US

(Review by Martin Tailby)

Presented by: **CONCORDIA YOUTH THEATRE**
Director: Jeremy Holt
Musical Director: Mike Grant
Choreographer: Jane Brown
Venue: Hinckley, The Concordia Theatre
Date: 16 – 20 June 2009

This new show, just released to NODA Societies by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, the first show they ever wrote.

A great production, very imaginative and full of energy. All the parts were extremely well played. Excellent chorus casting, some good choreography, well designed set, made by the company, well costumed, some very good lighting, the singing was excellent and musical direction first rate. This show has been given as part of Andrew Lloyd Webber's 60th birthday celebrations for NODA Companies with part of the royalty being donated to Barnardo's. Nice to see their presence at the theatre, being fully supportive of this excellent production. I was lucky enough to be invited to the Gala Night which was extremely enjoyable and was attended by the local Barnardo's co-ordinator who praised the show and Jeremy for all the efforts he had put into it.

A truly magical evening at the theatre. Well done Concordia Youth. Another success.

BUGSY MALONE

Presented by: **STARLIGHT**
Director: Julie Easter
Musical Director: Oli Thompson
Choreographer: Jeanette Patrick-Cooper

Choosing the perennial Bugsy Malone as their inaugural production, Julie Easter brought together 38 youngsters adding a further dimension to the already talented town of Loughborough. Unfortunately the programme doesn't list the performers' name against their character, but demonstrating fine voices and talent that can only continue to grow were Blousey Brown and Fizzy. Bugsy, Fat Sam and Dandy Dan were all equally strong with Doodles/Ventriloquist with his cameo part showing comic timing, strong voice and confidence. A fairly minimal set worked in their favour and the pull-along cars were just fantastic. Well done to everyone involved, looking forward to your next production.

REBECCA

Presented by: **THE FESTIVAL PLAYERS**
Director: Ingrid Daniels
Designer: Andrew McGowan

As the curtain lifted to reveal another fine set, I knew we were in for a treat. All the characters were lifted off the page and were brilliantly re-created. The overbearing and prejudiced Beatrice Lacy was perfectly played by Jane Milne, providing a stark contrast to Susanne Martin's Mrs de Winter living on the edge of her nerves. Bringing a multi-faceted character was Chris Moore with her at times meddling, at times bordering on the in-same Mrs Danvers. Not to be outdone the men were a real tour-de-force but special mention must be made of Nick Grainger who's Maxim de Winter was carried off with great presence.

Huge congratulations to the set/props/costume teams who's faithful attention to detail really paid off.

FUR COAT NO KNICKERS

Presented by: **KIBWORTH THEATRE COMPANY**
Producer/Director: Mark Wood
Designer: Andrew McGowan

On possibly the hottest night of the year we all melted together! Once again Kibworth made clever use of the space available, making it work for them rather than against. Nevertheless there were some unavoidable breaks between scenes, which were unsettling for the audience, encouraging them to chat. The group as a whole had worked hard to get the most out of their characters and some great examples were Liz Wood's Edith Ollerenshaw and Trish Kenyon's Muriel Greenhalgh. Playing the best drunk I think I've ever seen and really getting into the part was Mike Dack as Father Finbar Molloy. Never an easy thing to convincingly pull off, he took it to just the right level to keep it real.

A tiny "Attention to Detail" gripe though was the lack of liquid in mugs etc and tucking into a slice of white bread instead of fish, chips and peas. Also care has to be taken when pretending to smoke cigarettes, as they can be the biggest give away.

Looking forward to A Christmas Carol.

"OKLAHOMA"

Review by James Raynor

Presented by: **LOUGHBROUGH AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Venue: Town Hall, Loughborough
Date: 16-21 March 2009

After a warm welcome by the front of house team I was pleased to settle down into my seat for the final performance of this show, which, I have to say, is one of my favourite musicals. There were some great performances from Roger Clarke (Curly), Ben Cooper (Will), Andy Marmoy (Ali Hakim), James Robinson (Jud) and Sandra Worcester (Aunt Eller) who stepped in at the last minute to play the role and Laura Orton (Laurie). Laura had a particularly sweet singing voice but I would liked to have seen her dance in the ballet & judging by her performance earlier in Act One feel she would have been able to do this as Curly did, and it did look rather strange – either have them both perform in the ballet or neither of them, as to some audience members it might have seemed as if Curly was having an affair! Nevertheless I did enjoy the ballet section in particular, the lady who danced as Laurey performed very well and thought the chorus were utilised very well indeed – not just in the ballet but overall. Whilst the choreography for the chorus was quite simple in places it was well executed. There were some inaccuracies though including certain props, tap dancing in modern tap shoes in the "Kansas City" number and the lighting changes from day to night which didn't always happen on time or at all in some cases. But I have to say that the sound was awful in places due to positioning of mics on costumes, some terrible feedback, and a wonderful but overpowering orchestra in places. Perhaps ensure full sound checks are carried out before every performance in the future. I really liked the set though and the fact that it was made by members of the company deserves credit where credit is due, and overall the show was enjoyed by the audience, who were clapping away during the finale with the whole cast on stage, who seemed to be having the time of their lives. I wish you all the best with "The Likes of Us."

DISTRICT 7 - NORTHANTS NORTH (REVIEWS BY KEVIN SHEEN)

THE GONDOLIERS

Presented by: **WELLINGBOROUGH ARTS BARN G & S SOCIETY**
Venue: The Castle Theatre, Wellingborough
Director: Carole Hanson
Musical Director: Keith Green

The production was extremely well directed by Carole Henson (I particularly enjoyed her incorporation of modern day props and topics into the performance) who also deserves recognition for her choreography.

The orchestra, under the excellent Direction of Keith Green, gave a faultless performance on the night. Both Keith Green and Jonathan Ellson (Rehearsal Pianist) deserve recognition for their efforts in extracting some wonderful chorus work and harmonies throughout the entire performance.

Mike Greys portrayal of The Grand Inquisitor was a delight. Where-as some performers seemed to lose clarity of diction and accent, his remained wholly audible throughout. No mean feat considering the vocal gymnastics some of his musical numbers demanded.

Susan Drake was well cast as the Duchess of Plaza Toro and her facial expressions were a joy to watch Very well played. Phillip Abbott played his part (Marco) with the naivety and innocence of a lovelorn youth and the audience warmed to him accordingly.

The part of Giuseppe seemed an ideal vehicle for Brett Hanson to showcase his obvious talents. His portrayal of the character was excellent - Humorous; endearing; professional. Samantha Burgess was equally as impressive. An acute sense of comic timing, clarity of voice, expressive features and seamless delivery coupled with a strong stage presence and awareness of other performers made for a wonderful performance.

All in all a very enjoyable all round performance.

THE FULL MONTY

Presented by: **KETTERING OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Venue: The Lighthouse Theatre, Kettering
Director: Ray Jeffery
Musical Director: Rod Iliffe

Kettering Operatic Society; stand up and take a bow.

This was an extremely enjoyable performance of a very good show. Very well directed by Ray Jeffery, with equally as impressive Musical Direction from Rod Iliffe, the show was greeted with boundless enthusiasm by the mainly female audience (quelle surprise!) from start to finish.

Scott Connor got the show off to a rousing start with a striptease that had the women in the audience clamouring for that little bit more (no pun intended) whilst Bernie Keith pick-pocketed the dance studio scene with an overdose of comic flamboyance.

Congratulations must go to Susan Moore who gave a wholly convincing performance as Jeanette Burmeister. But it was the leading men that the majority of the audience came to see....and they didn't disappoint. Shaun McMahon, Mick Adhemar and Mike Balderson all gave more than credible performances throughout whilst Exley Edwards gave an enthusiastically convincing performance as 'Horse'. However, it was Ian Stark and Scott Andrews who stood out. Ian maintained his characters persona, demeanour and accent to a high standard throughout and sang superbly. Scott took the audience by the scruff of the neck and led them on a roller-coaster ride of emotions as his character battled with self-consciousness and low self esteem. Very well done to both!

Praise must also go to the back-stage crew. I am not a fan of the crew being seen on stage but this crew went about their tasks with admirable focus and in total silence. Well done to all.

WEST SIDE STORY

Presented by: **C.A.T.S.**
Venue: The Willows Theatre, Corby
Director: Peter Darnell
Musical Director: Kay Tompkins
Choreographer: Katrina Ruffea

This was a highly enjoyable performance. Extremely well directed by Peter Darnell and superbly choreographed by Katrina Ruffea; it was fast paced and slick from start to finish. The Musical Direction from Kay Tompkins added to the overall feel of the piece and she extracted some lovely harmony singing in places. Jet Song got the performance off to an excellent start and the show didn't look back.

Luke Simcoe gave a steady, straight faced, sometimes menacing performance as Bernardo and this was extremely well balanced by the energetic portrayal of Riff by Richard Walker Glen. Chuck Middleton gave a very strong performance as Action and it was 'Gee Officer Krupke' (performed by the Jets but led by Chuck) that was the highlight of the musical numbers. However, even this scene was almost stolen by Adele Logue whose cheekily impish yet comically brash portrayal of 'Anybody's' was a true delight. Take a bow. Joe McMahon too gave a wonderfully emotion charged performance as Doc.

Steve Atterbury gave a nice performance as Tony and Heather Kynnersley gave a wonderful performance as Anita. She was strong throughout and gave an extremely dramatic performance in the 'taunting' scene. Rachel Compton was excellent. Her singing, acting and dancing would all grace a bigger stage.

Congratulations must go to both the male and female company. This show is, to a large degree, dependant on a strong chorus and this chorus did not come up wanting. There was focus and attention on the plot whilst on stage; an awareness of others; and the acting did not stop till they were out of sight of the audience. Very well done to all!

AN EVENING WITH GARY LINEKER

Presented by: **NOMADS**
Venue: The Studio, Wellingborough
Director: Mark Walker

This was a very enjoyable show and deserved more of a response from those watching. It was very well directed by Mark Walker and equally as well performed by the cast.

Dave Freeman (Bill) came across as a typical armchair fan; blinkered to all but the importance of the night. Jane Cox (Monica) was the perfect foil for him. She gave an extremely credible performance as the much put upon and undervalued wife from the outset; very well done to both.

Lester Cooke was superb. His simpering, whimpering, irritating portrayal of Ian was an excellent example of the comic art. His facial expressions and 'I need a friend' demeanour rekindled memories of the schoolboy no-one wanted in their team and was, therefore, never picked until there was no other choice. Add to this the totally contrasting, bullish, cocksure character of Dan Hudson, excellently played by Alan Galway (cheeky), and the scene was set for an evening of comic insults and gripes that the whole cast batted back and forth with seemingly effortless ease. Excellently done!!

However, it was Leisa Cooke who stood out. Not only was her acting superb (and non-stop) but her diction and accent remained faultless throughout; an excellent performance.

MURDER WEEKEND

Presented by: **RUSHDEN AMATEUR THEATRICAL SOCIETY**

Venue: The Pemberton Centre

Director: Tony Woodward

This play was extremely well directed by Tony Woodward who also deserves particular praise for the set design.

David Edgeworth gave a fidgety edge to his character (Ashley McAvoy) and was complimented by Vicki Edgeworth who, with a totally relaxed portrayal of Patsy, helped make the two characters believable. Gillian Tidbury (Livia) and John Curson (Stanley) were excellent. Gillian was comically flirtatious from start to finish whilst John gave a strong 'whimsical' performance. Nicola Pott (Mrs Johnson) gave her character a naivety that worked whilst Asleigh Pott also deserves mention. She may not have had the biggest role but she made the part her own. Paul Darnell (Wallace Wainwright) gave a strong performance. His change of character from 'nice' to 'menacing' was very fluid. Chele Height (Dorothy) was infectious. She seemed wholly immersed in her role and was focussed from start to finish. However, it was Debbie Draycott (Violet) who stole the show. Her accent, demeanour and facial expressions were excellent.

More please.

MUSICAL MOODS

Presented by: **OUNDLE G & S SOCIETY**

Venue: The Stahl Theatre

Director: Gill Potts

From start to finish this show impressed. There were individuals who stood out on the night (Marion Porter for one – what a voice) but it was the company numbers that really made the show.

What an absolute treat to see performers clearly enjoying themselves on stage and sharing that enjoyment with the audience; to hear T's, S's and K's pronounced at the end of words without appearing to be over-pronounced; to see a company (as a whole and as individuals) following every wave and guiding stroke of the Musical Directors baton. Superb.

'I write the songs' – excellent balance and harmonies from the very start. 'Vincent' – draped in pathos and melancholy. 'Sunny side of the street' – fun, fun, fun! 'Happy together' – slick. 'All that Jazz' – professionally strong. 'The impossible dream' – well, I would run out of superlatives.

Val Jones was excellent; the scenery and lighting was minimalist but extremely impressive; the venue a delight.

But the linchpin to the whole event was the M.D Gill Potts.. Her control seemed effortless whilst she exuded confidence to the company and even had time to have fun with the audience. She created, and extracted, some wonderful harmonies that both delighted and impressed those fortunate enough to be attending this outstanding performance. Superbly done!!

DEATH BY FATAL MURDER

Presented by: **WCADS**

Venue: The Studio Theatre

The Studio at The Castle is a very intimate venue that lends itself ideally to this kind of production. Being at such close quarters with the audience can be a little un-nerving and, at times, I felt one or two of the cast let their nerves show. However, this, combined with the efforts from other members of the cast to contain their laughter at comic lines that, perhaps, lose their humour during the rehearsal period only to spring back to life through the medium of the audience, added to the charm of the piece.

Helen Wildman's' portrayal of Blodwyn Morgan was eerily reminiscent of Great Aunts sadly gone. Stand her in front of a black leadened hearth guarding a whistling kettle; or place her (arms folded) on a red-painted doorstep of a mid-terraced house in the shadow of the colliery pit-head, and she could have passed for family.....isn't it. Beverly Green and Trevor Cook gave admirable performances as Ginny Farquhar and Enzo Garibaldi whilst John Little, as the much put upon Constable Thompkins, gave a fine performance. His facial squirming at the 'spooneristic' failings of the aptly named Inspector Pratt was a joy to watch.

Kellie Butler, Clive Minor and Barbara Thompson all gave credible performances in their own right that kept the twisted plot line ticking over. But it was David Manders' sterling performance as Inspector Pratt that made the play the overall success it was. His delivery, timing and characterisation were faultless and he deserves full credit for taking the audience with him through this comic misadventure.

Extremely well played!

SWEET CHARITY

(Review by Nanette Lovell)

Presented by: **ECLIPSE PERFORMING ARTS**
Director: Gavin R Mills
Musical Director: Paul Headland
Choreographer: Angela McManus

A difficult show for amateurs to perform as you need a really strong leading lady and WOW that is exactly what Eclipse had. Charity was wonderfully played by Donna Mills who brought this vocally and physically demanding character to life. What a performance! All of the cast were well played with some doubling up with conviction. Everyone in the many dance routines were drilled to perfection. Special attention must also go to Kevin Sheen as Daddy Brubeck (And Herman) - a really strong performance. The simple set worked very well with good lighting and the many costumes were eye-catching, authentic and bright. All in all a great night out. Well done to everyone involved with the show.

SHOW: BLOOD BROTHERS

Presented by: **BONKERS THEATRICAL**
Dates: 13th – 18th July
Venue: The Studio, Wellingborough
Director: Mark Walker

This production was superb. It was extremely well directed, extremely well performed and built methodically to a climax which left many of the audience in tears; and if you create that sense of belief in your audience's mind you know you have a good show on your hands. Though accents tended to waiver in some scenes it would be churlish to view this in any negative way. The show was a joy to watch.

The lighting plan, setting and direction worked extremely well together and created moods that expertly matched the plot unfolding on stage.

No performer outshone another. From the brooding, but not overly sinister, portrayal of The Narrator (Mark Walker) to the increasingly neurotic, eventually psychotic portrayal of Mrs Lyons (Pam Dee) the actors took their characters, made them their own and delivered each one in turn to a very appreciative audience. Extremely enjoyable.

DISTRICT 8 - NORTHANTS SOUTH & MILTON KEYNES (REVIEWS BY NANETTE LOVELL)

THREE MUSKETEERS – LE PANTEAU!

Presented by: **THE HARDINGSTONE PLAYERS**
Venue: Champion School, Bugbrooke
Director: Rhiannon George
Musical Director: Simon Wolfenden

What a challenge to reproduce Alexandre Dumas's masterpiece – and take it to pantoland! 25 leading roles plus 24 scene changes would daunt many a company but not so the Hardingstone Players. A great evening was had by those on stage as well as in the audience. In such a company piece it is not possible to single out individuals for special mention as everyone worked so well as a team. True to pantomime we had a thigh slapping principal boy, a sweet principal girl, a dotty dame and numerous villains all adding to the hilarity! Traditional panto songs were included and we even had a song sheet! As well as the adult performers on stage and enjoying every minute of it were 'Le Chorus d'Enfants'. Special mention to accompanist Maureen Hanson and to the brilliant stage crew who ensured that the scenes were changed with the minimum of distraction. All in all a great production and one that Rhiannon George must be proud of. Well done to everyone involved.

THE GONDOLIERS

Presented by: **THE WOLVERTON GILBERT AND SULLIVAN SOCIETY**
Venue: Stantonbury Campus Theatre, Milton Keynes
Director & Choreographer: Graham Breeze
Musical Director: Mike Crofts

I always look forwards to my visit to this talented G&S society and this year was no exception. From the lovely colourful opening with the chorus of contadine selling their roses red and white to the entrance of the dashing chorus of gondoliers we knew we were in for a great evening. It is always difficult to single out individuals in such a company production but special mention goes to Giuseppe (Gordon Oliver) & Marco (Will Dyson) who set the female hearts a fluttering! They were well supported by Tessa (Jackie Burnicle) and Gianetta (Paula Grazer). Strong performances from Graham Mitchell (Duke of Plaza-Toro), Graham Breeze (Luiz), Kim Bennett (The Duchess of Plaza-Toro), Susan Dixon (Castilda), Alan Bennett (Don Alambra) and Angela Bowen (Inez). All the supporting roles were well played with excellent support from the enthusiastic assemblage.

Superb orchestra under the direction of Mike Crofts, Great set, lighting and costumes all added up to one great evening and one that director Graham Breeze must be really proud of. Well done to everyone involved with the Gondoliers.

KEY FOR TWO

Presented by: **THE BRACKLEY PLAYERS**
Venue: Southfield School, Brackley
Director: Stuart Dawe

This John Chapman and Dave Freeman farce brought gales of laughter from the very appreciative audience! Excellent performances from Jim Howson (Gordon), Jane Salmon (Harriet), Keith Frazer (Alec) and Sarah Dawe (Anne) well supported by Peter Milne, Fran Hollyoake and Janet Blinden all playing great cameo roles. The production was fast and furious and the laughs came one after the other leaving the audience exhausted! It was obvious that the cast were enjoying themselves as much as the audience – working so well together – It was obvious the amount of work that had gone into this production. The set worked very well enabling quick entrances/exits to follow through smoothly – essential in a farce. It is always good to see a less well known play. It was a lovely touch to serve tea and cake to the audience (who sat at tables) during the interval. Director Stuart Dawe must be really proud of this production. Congratulations to everyone involved with “key for two”.

FROM CABARET TO BROADWAY

Presented by: **THE HARDINGSTONE PLAYERS**
Venue: Hardingstone Village Hall

What a pleasant way to spend a lovely spring evening sitting in a cabaret-style hall with a glass of wine watching a selection from the shows – too many to mention – I lost count after a dozen or so! The whole company produced a very good sound with many of the group taking solos from the various shows. To complement the music we saw several very funny sketches and monologues which added to the variety of the evening. Great to see such a range of ages taking part – It was obvious that everyone on stage was having a great time and this came over the footlights and enhanced the audience’s enjoyment. It really is not possible to single out any individuals BUT I must say what a great musical director you have – Simon Wolvendon – you really are lucky to have an M.D. who obviously enjoys being on stage as well! Well done to everyone – The amount of hard work certainly paid off.

ABIGAIL'S PARTY

Presented by: **UNDER THE TOWER DRAMA**
Venue: Earls Barton Parish Hall
Director: Vicky Lacey

On entering the parish hall it was obvious that we had all been invited to Abigail's Party! The audience were seated around tables complete with crisps, nuts and cheese and pineapple and sausages on sticks! This was a first class production of what can be a difficult play for amateurs to make a success of. From the minute Bev (Nic Sears) came on stage we knew we were in for a treat and so it proved. A wonderfully talented cast - Laurence (Robin Hillman) a mild man or so we thought! - Angela (Sally Milner) and Tony (Alistair Way) as the new neighbours - Angela on the same wavelength as Bev and Tony wondering what he had let himself in for! The cast was completed by Susan (Penny Prince) the quiet, refined neighbour who only came along as her teenage daughter wanted her out of the house to have her own party. All characters were brilliantly portrayed and very such in keeping with the 1970's. Super set and excellent costumes and props (I loved the Youth Dew perfume!) all added up to a wonderfully entertaining evening. Congratulations to Vicky Lacey, the director for keeping the play moving at a cracking pace. Well done to all involved.

BOOGIE NIGHTS

Presented by: **MILTON KEYNES AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY.**
Venue: Stantonbury Campus Theatre.
Director: John Dowell
Musical Director: Mike Crofts
Coreographer: Juliet Ratnage

What a fantastic show and one I have never seen before! From the beginning we were "Welcomed" by Baz the Bouncer, who told us the rules of the disco to the final scene everything about this show was terrific. All of the principals were really well cast and playing their own age groups as was the whole company. How lucky you are to have so many talented youngsters. The set, special effects and that wacky programme were great. And what about those boots and costumes - Wow! Great Musicians and Choreography all added up to a brilliant night out, Congratulations to director, John Dowell (Plus Hair!) and everyone involved in this superb show.

"TABLE MANNERS"

Presented by: **TREAD THE BOARDS THEATRE GROUP**
Venue: The Madcapm Theatre, Wolverton.
Director: Chris Simms

The cast for this popular Ayckbourn comedy-drama had been extremely well chosen and all suited their respective characters admirably. Sally Carson as "Sarah" gave a brilliant performance and her scenes with Becky Walters as "Annie" set the standard for this production. There were some impressive performances from Pauline Gruner, (in her first stage role), Glen Barford, Mike Leggett and Steve Allen. The pace was well maintained and the laughs from the audience proved this! Cris Sim's direction was tight and the scenes with food were well handled. Well done to everyone involved - a good evening's entertainment.

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

(Review by Martin Tailby)

Presented by: **THE PAULERSPURY PLAYERS**
Director: Jack Lewis
Musical Director: John Smith
Choreographer: Pam Lord
Venue: Paulerspury Village Hall
Date: 18 – 29 February 2009

This was a great, traditional, community pantomime, the first time I have seen this company perform. Well cast, some interesting performances from the principals, good chorus work, nice sets, suitable for the show. Costumes were good but would have liked to have seen more changes for company and a nice set of walk-down costumes. The show deserved to be better dressed.

I felt the script was a little dated but everybody seemed to enter into the spirit and the audience enjoyed it and seemed to pick up on the localised humour. A lovely venue, obviously just been refurbished.

Thankyou for the warm welcome we received and best of luck with your future productions.