

**DISTRICT 1**

**SOUTH DERBYSHIRE**

**KEITH SCOTT-SAVAGE**

No Reviews Available.

**DISTRICT 2**

**NORTH DERBYSHIRE**

**JOYCE HANDBURY**

**WIZARD OF OZ**

Review by: Joyce Handbury  
Presented by: **CHESTERFIELD OPERATIC SOCIETY**  
Venue: Pomegranate Theatre, Chesterfield  
Performance Dates: November 2009  
Director: Carole Copeland  
Musical Director: Jonathan Francis  
Choreography: Paula Wilson and Julie Metcalfe



A truly lovely opening set greeted Dorothy as she walked across the front of the auditorium carrying Toto, a seven-year old Yorkshire Terrier that had been rescued from the RSPCA some two years previously and belonged to a Society member. The dog was so cute and perfectly behaved that whenever he appeared on stage he completely stole the limelight. The role of Dorothy is a big ask of anyone and fourteen year old Jessica Widdowson very ably coped with the demanding role. She has a beautiful, clear voice and her singing of Somewhere Over The Rainbow was delightful. As the Scarecrow, Kerry Towndrow was staggeringly great, John Rimington as Tin Woodman was stiffly admirable and Karl Brennan as the Cowardly Lion was roaringly superb. Sarah Shepherd as Glinda was virtuously sparkling and scarily splendid was Paula Wilson as the Wicked Witch. Completing the principal line-up were Ian Jones (Uncle Henry / Emerald City Guard) and Doug Melloy (Professor / Wizard of Oz). The enthusiasm of the large cast of children was infectious and they were splendid in their many different roles. I was somewhat disappointed with the more technical side of the production - no yellow brick road, a poor twister effect, and the mighty wizard was rather feebly portrayed behind the screen but the colourful sets, good choreography, splendid costumes, wonderful orchestra, great individual and chorus performances made up for this. Well done!

**A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE**

Review by: Joyce Handbury  
Presented by: **FOURBLOKES**  
Venue: Guildhall, Derby  
Performance Dates: November 2009  
Director: Barry Taylor

On a small stage in a small theatre we were transported to the hot and humid deep south of America by a very imaginative set with excellent props. The atmosphere was further enhanced by an effective lighting plot and appropriate musical inserts. The role of Blanche DuBois is pivotal to this play and Sandy Lanes portrayal was sensational. She brought out every facet of this tormented lady with such a compelling performance it was truly awe inspiring. There was also impeccable support from Sheridan Lowe as Stella and Tom Halten gave a commendable interpretation as her husband, Stanley. Paul Wilson as Mitch excelled as the hapless suitor and all of the cast in supporting roles were most accomplished. One small disappointment for me, was the scene with Stanley and Blanche leading up to the rape. It was frighteningly convincing until the inevitable was to happen when unfortunately the moment was lost either by the directors interpretation or Toms seeming inability to remove his pyjama top with speed. It is a play of substantial length, but I can honestly say that this wasn't an issue as I was totally immersed in this wonderful production. Congratulations to all involved and especially to Sandy Lane for her brilliant and unforgettable characterisation of Blanche DuBois.



## **COPACABANA**

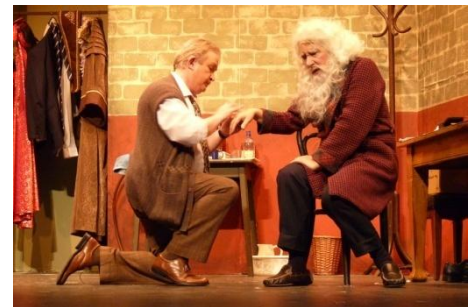
Review by: Phil Williams  
Presented by: **NOTTINGHAM OPERATIC SOCIETY**  
Venue: Theatre Royal Nottingham  
Performance dates: 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November 2009  
Director: Denise Palin  
Musical Director: Stephen Williams  
Choreographer: Denise Palin

What a task taking on Director and Choreographer for a show with so much movement and creating such a superb end result, congratulations Denise! Stephen showed his expertise on the musical side keeping a good tempo throughout while providing the contrast and feeling required. While there was very good playing from the band and singing from the stage, there did seem to be technical problems with the sound system which meant that it was very difficult to hear any singing in the louder brass passages. An abundance of talent on stage with a very strong line up of the main characters, all providing a good stage presence and fine character portrayal in addition to the required musical capability. The choreography and dance was excellent and a real joy to behold, enhanced still further by the magnificent costumes. A good set was well used, as was the lighting to enhance the visual effect. Efficient back stage work kept the show running with minimum time between scenes. Perhaps not such a popular show, but certainly a very good production.

## **THE DRESSER**

Review by: Phil Williams  
Presented by: **NOTTINGHAM ARTS THEATRE**  
Venue: Nottingham Arts Theatre  
Performance dates: 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> November 2009  
Director: Patricia Tribe

This was an interesting play to set, with little action in the opening section and some repetition in dialog at the same time. However, the Director and cast held the audience through this section and from then on had no problem in maintaining interest, making the most of the drama and humour of the piece as it built up to its very effective conclusion. Colin Treliving and Barry Holland as Sir and Norman gave excellent performances, feeding of each other with their contrasting roles, and they were very well supported by the remaining cast members each developing their particular character. The set was superb and well used, with lots of period detail, indeed many of us would be familiar with similar theatre facilities for a few decades after the 1940s! Loved the period background music prior to each act, it did help to set the scene. A good play well performed and easy to appreciate for those of us with any theatrical background and use of grease paint.



## **LAW & ORDER**

Review by: Phil Williams  
Presented by: **THREE COUNTIES MUSICAL SOCIETY**  
Venue: Chatsworth Centre Long Eaton  
Performance dates: 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> November 2009  
Producer: Colin Marsh  
Musical Director: Christine Warren

A concert based on the theme of Law & Order as portrayed on the musical stage, incorporating a full production of Trial by Jury. It was well produced, making good use of the stage area and the amount of movement achieved certainly belied the limitations of the performing area. It was unfortunate that Christine could not direct the music on the night due to illness, but her hard work in preparing the items showed through with the high standard of music in the presentation. There were lots of good performances from the many individuals with solo items and super chorus singing with good balance, lots of interpretation and accurate finishing. The unaccompanied ladies' version of (Abba's) "Fernando" was particularly splendid. A simple set for "Trial" but with fine attention to detail such as the Judge's chair, while the lighting was effective and well used. A very entertaining evening enjoyed by all, and the full houses show the support for this group

## **NOBODY'S FOOL**

Review by: Anne Key-Huckerby  
Presented by: **SCOTHERN PLAYERS**  
Venue: Scothern Village Hall  
Performance Dates: From 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> November and 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November  
Director: Gail Dennis

Following on from Simon Williams' very popular 'Nobody's Perfect', this sequel was equally as amusing. Steve Taylor was impressive in his dual role of Lenny the statistician and myrtle the romantic novelist. Jodie Smart was well cast as his daughter, Dee Dee; Ruth Noon was very good as his ex-wife, Fran, while Nicola Brunton was sublimely OTT as the journalist, Leticia, who interviews him. Veteran actor, Dennis Turnell played a blinder as Gus, Lenny's father. A great favourite with local audiences, he's decided he must retire from the amateur stage and he certainly finished on a 'high'. The technical aspects were in good hands with excellent sound effects. The set was to Scothern's high standards and the costumes were fine. Well done, everyone.

## **DON'T DRESS FOR DINNER**

Review by: Anne Key-Huckerby  
Presented by: **LOUTH PLAYGOERS**  
Venue: Riverhead Theatre  
Performance Dates: From 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November  
Director: Margaret Blackmore  
Assistant: Julie Gibson

This Robin Hawdon adaptation of Marc Camoletti's farce found great favour with the audience. The six members of the cast had been carefully chosen and worked extremely well together. They delivered their pithy lines, long involved explanations and doubles entendres full of innuendo with confidence and panache to achieve great comedy. I congratulate all the players on their respective performances. The set was robustly constructed with decor, furnishings and props that were really suitable. The lighting and other effects were very pleasing and the costumes were eminently appropriate. This was a most worthy production.

## **HERE'S THE LATEST! MADRIGALS, SOLI, CHORUSES, SONGS, ETC**

Review by: Anne Key-Huckerby  
Presented by: **LINDSEY RURAL PLAYERS**  
Venue: The Broadbent Theatre, Wickenby  
Performance Dates: 21<sup>st</sup> November 2009  
Musical Director: Jan Allen

The title refers to what was really a Victorian-style music Hall. This provided a most entertaining evening by the Broadbent Singers, a talented offshoot of the Lindsey Rural Players. The stage had tastefully draped curtains with a couple of benches and an aspidistra atop a whatnot leaving plenty of space for the dozen or so singers to move as required. For much of the time Ian Myers was the Master of Ceremonies giving richly alliterative introductions to each act. The continuity was excellent. We were encouraged to join in the ditties and fully enjoyed the lyrics of those less familiar. The singing throughout was tuneful; there was plenty of comedy and we even had a can-can routine from three of the young ladies. The costumes were most attractive. Full marks to the accompanist, Mike Boltz. A great evening.

## **SAXILBY SHOWTIME**

Review by: Anne Key-Huckerby  
Presented by: **SAXILBY DRAMA CIRCLE**  
Venue: Saxilby Community Hall  
Performance Dates: 26th November 2009  
Director: David Makepeace  
Musical Director: Ian Atkinson  
Choreographers: Yvonne and Yvette Kimber

A truly varied programme provided an excellent evening's entertainment with songs from eleven different musicals ranging from the opening number from Kiss Me Kate to the Lambeth Walk from Me and My Girl. Between each medley came ebullient comedy turns effectively linking each one. The youngest members of the society featured in songs from Buzzy Malone and performed them admirably. While joining in the other sections, the 'teens and twenties' came into their own with numbers, including a remarkable dance routine, from High School Musical. The accompaniment was using taped music and at times I felt this was rather too loud, however, the singing throughout was pleasant, the movement was impressive and the enthusiasm infectious. Well done, everyone

## TABLE MANNERS

Review by: Anne Key-Huckerby  
Presented by: **RETFORD LITTLE THEATRE**  
Venue: Retford Little Theatre  
Performance Dates: 24<sup>th</sup> November 2009  
Director: Judith Walker

The set for this Ayckbourn comedy was first rate with excellent decor and furnishings. The props team's efforts were notable, too, along with those responsible for the lighting and other effects. All the six-strong cast played their respective roles to perfection. Gaby Hardwick (Annie), Lesley Warburton as the very bossy Sarah, David Cox (Tom), Stephen Walker (Reg), Robert Warburton as the irrepressible Norman and Sheila Eyre as Ruth gave sterling performances. I have seen this play several times and this production was the best so far. Congratulations to all concerned. The audience loved it!

## THE LITTLE PHOTOGRAPHER

Review by: Anne Key-Huckerby  
Presented by: **GAINSBOROUGH THEATRE COMPANY**  
Venue: The Old Nick Theatre, Gainsborough  
Performance Dates: 25<sup>th</sup> November  
Director: Alan Ayris

This is a most interesting play adapted from a Daphne du Maurier short story by Derek Hoddinott. It's set in a French hotel in the early nineteen hundreds where a local photographer has a romantic fling with a holiday-maker. Jamie Staton was extremely good as the photographer, Paul, while Dawn Horrey's performance as the manipulative housewife, Marie, was superb. Sammy Ayris and Michele Barker were suitably cast as her teenage daughters with Mike Tomlinson giving a sound portrayal as their father. Paddy Johnson's performance as Miss Clay, the girls' governess, was assured. Marie's friend, Elise, was played extremely well by Eleanor Bowker, Kim Newby was coldly calculating as Paul's sister and Alex Staton's steady role as a waiter completed the cast comprehensively. The costumes were excellent and so was the make-up. This was a very worthy production

**DISTRICT 5**

**SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE**

**PETER BREACH**

## CASH ON DELIVERY

Review by: Peter Breach  
Presented by: **GRANTHAM DRAMATIC SOCIETY**  
Venue: Guildhall Arts Centre, Grantham  
Performance Dates: 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November 2009  
Directors: Mary O'Neill and Vicky Williamson

This farce, written by Michael Cooney, whose father Ray has penned many plays of this genre, really does support the claim "Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive". Eric Swan (played by Chris Dakin) has been unemployed for two years and during that time has derived an income from claiming benefits from the DHSS for his lodger Norman Bassett (Paul Meakin) and several other fictitious characters. Eric has also enlisted the help of his Uncle George to dispose of ill-gotten NHS goods via car boot sales and naturally endeavours to keep his wife (Helen Pack) in the dark regarding his nefarious activities. It all starts to go wrong when Eric reports that Norman has died and a DSS Inspector (John Sheppard) is sent to investigate. What follows is a series of fabrications that become more and more outrageous as Eric, Norman and Uncle George add to their lies, generating much humour based on criminality and death. The principals were well supported by Alison Jackson, Joy Wilson, Mike Toon, Shirley Toon and Holly Vincent. The "newcomers" to the cast made significant contributions to this production, especially Paul Meakin. All the players had clear diction and good projection. This play was staged on a well designed and constructed set that withstood the rigours it was exposed to. A very good effort!

## AN INSPECTOR CALLS

Review by: Peter Breach  
Presented by: **BOSTON PLAYGOERS**  
Venue: Blackfriars Theatre, Boston  
Performance Dates: From 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November 2009  
Director: Rachael Geddes

I was greatly impressed with Boston Playgoers production of this classic thriller by J.B. Priestly. The play was staged on a most appropriately designed and constructed set with the props and furniture carefully chosen to match the period.

Rachael Geddes directed a very capable team of actors who, without exception, delivered first-rate performances. The head of the Birling family (played by Stuart Bull) was full of his own importance, suitably authoritative and well partnered by his wife (Judy Muggleston) who provided steely support. Rachel Rowett, as the daughter Sheila, showed herself capable of compassion (unlike her parents) as did her brother, played by Ben Long. This was Ben's debut at Blackfriars and on this showing he has a very bright future. Gail Lingard made up the household group, playing the part of the maid with quiet dignity. Danny Chester-Bush was most convincing as Sheila's aristocratic suitor. Peter Kay as the police inspector carried out his incisive questioning in an admirable fashion, determined not to let anyone off the hook. This was superb entertainment. Well done all concerned!

## OLIVER

Review by: Peter Breach  
Presented by: **BOSTON OPERATIC SOCIETY**  
Venue: The Blackfriars Arts Centre  
Performance Dates: 21<sup>st</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> November 2009  
Director: Richard Laight  
Musical Director: Lynne Baker  
Choreographers: Rachel Pick & Katy Tabor

This popular show has a strong well-known storyline interspersed with a variety of well-written songs and when performed to a standard such as that attained by the B.O.S, the result is first class entertainment. There was excellent characterisation from the principals, particularly Oliver, played by Jenny Brown, Nancy, played by Jodie Marshall and the Artful Dodger, played by George Stainfield, all of whom were appearing in their first productions with the company; support was provided by a lively chorus both in terms of song and dance. The hired set and costumes were appropriate to the period and the stage crew did sterling work. Fagin's make-up was excellent. The orchestra provided marvellous music, though in my opinion the vocals were a tad over amplified. Congratulations to everyone involved in providing such a splendid show.



**DISTRICT 6A**

**NORTH LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND**

**MARTIN TAILBY**

## OLIVER

Review by: Philip Brown  
Presented by: **THE ESNA PLAYERS**  
Performance Dates: From 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> November 2009.  
Venue: Loughborough Town hall  
Director: Emma Adcock  
Musical director: Gareth Wynne  
Choreographer: Carl Brierley-Edwards

Oliver is always a crowd pleaser, and the packed crowd at Loughborough Town Hall for the first night of ESNA's production certainly had plenty to be pleased about. Emma Adcock's lively production was a treat. It is hard to single out any performance without upsetting all the excellent cast, but praise must go to all the principals. Louis Gale gave a confident and moving performance in the title role; he seemed undaunted by the part. Fagin is not an easy role to play in modern times, but Robert Bromley-Buhler made him excellently comic, devious and likeable. Rachel Ingham's Nancy and Ashley Bright's Bill Sykes were just what they should be – warm and moving for Nancy and vicious and menacing for Bill.

Other actors gave us splendid Dickensian eccentrics, particularly Gary Oxenham and Angie Whitmore as the Sowerberrys and Steve Illidge and Linda Moulton as Mr Bumble and widow Corney.

As one would expect from an ESNA performance the singing, dancing and acting were first rate. Add to this an effective and simple set and perfect wardrobe, and it's hardly surprising that the audience gave the performance a cheering ovation.

**DISTRICT 6B**

**SOUTH LEICESTERSHIRE & LEICESTER**

**CHRISTINE CLARKE**

## ANNIE GET YOUR GUN

Review By: Martin Tailby  
Presented by: **CONCORDIA AMATURE OPERATIC SOCIETY**  
Venue: Concordia Theatre  
Performance Dates: From 3<sup>rd</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November 2009  
Director: Nanette Goodman  
Musical Director: Sarah Bright  
Choreographer: Lisa Marsh

This bright, vibrant young company gave us a stunning production of what has to be one of Irving Berlin's best known musicals. This show has had many revivals and is currently in the West End at the moment. Nanette gave us a slick, modern and thoroughly enjoyable production. Lucy Miller as Annie Oakley gave a very confident performance as did Adam Richardson as Frank Butler. Generally these parts are associated with older performers but these two gave a breath of fresh air to the parts. All the other parts in the show were well cast and suited to the parts. Well executed dance routines, excellent orchestra. Excellent wardrobe, good sets. This production showed what can be done with an old show performed by a young company giving a fresh dimension to it. The classical numbers 'anything you can do I can do better', 'you can't get a man with a gun' and the most famous song of all 'there's no business like show business' all came across extremely well. Well done Nanette and your company for remodelling an old show in to a very enjoyable production of Annie Get Your Gun.

## **BROADWAY OUR WAY**

Review by: Kevin Sheen.  
Presented by: **THEATREWORKZ**  
Venue: The Masque, Kettering  
Performance Dates: 14<sup>th</sup> November 2009  
Director: Neil Richardson

Compilation shows are invariably used as an opportunity to showcase the talents of those within a society who may not normally get the opportunity to 'shine'. This was not the case in this production.

From the awesome rendition of 'Is you is' (my favourite number from the show) to the 'disturbing' and, frankly, enjoyably perverse rendition of 'We are what we are', this show was full of positive performances and plusses.

The only real downside for me was the sound issues. These would have been easily overcome by most of the singers had the issue not been intermittent. However, as I was sitting so close to the performers this was not too off-putting.

The show included some outstanding performers and performances. Neil Richardson shone throughout but was pushed all the way by Siobhan Ball and the ever-impressive Steve Hough. Louise Hough was excellent in 'The joy of motherhood' as was Daisie-Bell Downer in 'Practically Perfect'. 'Moon River' lacked something for me and there seemed to be some imbalance in the volume from one or two of the singers. However it was difficult to tell if this was due to the volume produced by the singers or by the sound issues that continued to plague the show.

The choreography (Anita Walker and Ben Jervis) was simple but effective; the direction (Neil Richardson) equally so. Anita Walker also extracted some lovely harmonies (exemplified in 'Is you is') and very much controlled a tight, if somewhat laid back (Chris Green) band. Finally I would just like to single out one other number that made an audible impression on the audience and was wonderfully performed by Steve Hough, Neil Richardson and Jon Sidey. 'Fathers of Fathers' was excellent.

## **THE KETTERING GANG SHOW**

Review by: Kevin Sheen.  
Presented by: **GLENDON DISTRICT SCOUT COUNCIL**  
Venue: The Lighthouse Theatre, Kettering  
Performance Dates: 18th – 21st November 2009  
Director: Helen Hughes & Karen Sloan

This was the first Gang Show I have had the pleasure of seeing for some time now and it was a reminder of how much fun is had and received by the cast and audience alike during such productions. The children (and adults) brought an energy and enthusiasm to the show that transmitted itself to the strong audience; an audience that included a large number of the Scouting fraternity with 'wannabe' ambitions who joined in so vociferously. So much so that at times it was difficult to hear the performances on stage for the performances in the stalls. There were also times when nerves seemed to get the better of some cast members and their singing performance lacked a little volume as a result.

However, this must not detract from what was a very colourful, very entertaining show. The lighting, setting and choreography were all simplistically done but to very good effect and praise must go to Helen Hughes, Karen Sloane and Michael Crick for their efforts. The set design was also very effective (Toy Story in particular) and Alan Thompson too deserves recognition for this. The costumes to the greater degree were excellent (well done team) and the band, under the tight Direction of Chris Winfield kept the musical numbers rolling along at a pace.

Every show has its highlights and whilst numbers such as 'Castle on a cloud' and 'Jolly Milkmaids' are worthy of mention it was the 'Way out West' and 'Golden Memories' (lovely use of scrim cloth) sections and, especially, 'Doll on a music box' (lovely voice and timing) that did it for me.

If I were to offer some constructive criticism it would be this; whilst it is difficult to keep enthusiastic children quiet behind the curtain during a scene change it is more noticeable to an audience when stage crew can be heard above them telling them to be quiet. This can also be distracting for the performers in front of the curtains.

It is a rare treat to view a show and see 56 numbers performed with such gusto and the night flew. It was a lovely touch to be asked to come back stage and meet the cast and crew after the show and it gave me an opportunity to proffer praise to individuals; an opportunity greatly appreciated. All in all an enjoyable, fun filled evening.