

DISTRICT 1

SOUTH DERBYSHIRE

KEITH SCOTT-SAVAGE

ANYTHING GOES

Review by: Keith Scott-Savage
Presented by: **CENTRAL OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Venue: Landau Forte College, Derby
Performance Dates: 9th to 13th March 2010
Producer: Nigel Taylor
Musical Director: David Blackwell
Choreographer: Sharon Harding

An excellent production, well directed and choreographed, with a cracking orchestra, and the best costumes I've ever seen for this show. This evergreen creation by Cole Porter has had many changes over the years, and although it has a fairly flimsy storyline the superb score makes it come out on top.

A good performance by Lisa Mills as Reno, who led the way with confidence and poise. Toby Bradford (Moonface) was in equal form with an exceptionally commanding display as Public Enemy No. 13. Chris Grantham (Billy) and Sharon Harding (Hope) provided the romantic aspect, singing quite beautifully, Paul Mills (Evelyn) and Alex Bailey (Bonnie) added to a very good principal line up, and along with a strong chorus made for a popular happy show that sends the audience out humming the tunes and tapping their feet.

THE SORCERER

Review by: Keith Scott-Savage
Presented by: **ROSEHILL MUSICAL SOCIETY**
Directed by: Beverley Graham
Musical Director: Bryan Clarke
Venue: The Guildhall Theatre, Derby
Performance dates: 16th to 20th March 2010

Colin Keast, in the title role, set the whole mood alight with a sardonic and competent performance. Guardsman Alexis was well played by Craig Arme, who sang beautifully throughout, and in particular a commanding part in "I rejoice that it's decided", with Peter Featherstone (Sir Marmaduke), Sue Leahy (Mrs Partlet), Tony Eley, (Dr Daly), and Aline. The pivotal role of Aline was played by Nicola Harris who sang quite superbly throughout. A comic cameo by John Wilson completed the principal line up. The chorus sang most solidly, but sadly struggled with some of the movements.

A practical set, and a superb orchestra completed a most satisfactory show. Thank you Rosehill for your hospitality.

DISTRICT 2

NORTH DERBYSHIRE

JOYCE HANDBURY

OLIVER

Review by: Joyce Handbury
Presented by: **HEANOR OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Venue: Heanor Gate Science College
Performance Dates: February 2010
Director: Rob Corner
Musical Director: Mandy Fogg
Choreography: Heather Weaver

An ingenious and dramatic set designed by Kim Harris and Garry Smith was the backbone of this show and was used to great effect throughout. A good lively opening by the children's chorus introduced us to eight year old Jamie Slack, who in his first public performance and despite having a nasty cold, coped well with this demanding role. Joseph Barry gave an exceedingly accomplished performance as The Artful Dodger excelling in both singing and dancing especially in the very energetic number Consider Yourself. Debbie Twells and Paul Whitworth were convincing as Mr. Bumble and Widow Corney as were Mr. & Mrs. Sowerby played by Brett Hart and Claire Farrand. Laura Simpson's lovely singing voice came to the fore when as Nancy, she gave a moving rendition of "As Long As He Needs Me". The difficult role of Fagin was played by Chris Kemp and I particularly liked his delivery of Reviewing the Situation. Dan Mee had a truly menacing and strident voice which he used to great effect in the role of Bill Sykes and what a beautifully behaved dog he had! The youngsters were so enthusiastic and gave their all and whilst there is not an awful lot for the adult chorus members to do they certainly added to the ambience whenever they appeared. Good stage lighting and sound, good costumes, a pleasing orchestra, good stage direction particularly in the use of the imaginative set all combined to make this an enjoyable experience.

THE KING AND I

Review by: Joyce Handbury
Presented by: **BELPER MUSICAL THEATRE**
Venue: Belper School
Performance Dates: February 2010
Producer: Anne Dunning
Musical Director: Terry Bailey
Choreography: Becky Dunning

This classical musical was performed superbly by Belper Musical Theatre. Elizabeth Brookes in both acting and singing, totally captured the plucky and politely assertive spirit of Anna and her young son Louis was delightfully played by Joshua Smith. Nick Hallam was extremely imposing as the King of Siam successfully expressing the sovereigns ultimate power and then the uncertainties brought about by Anna's influence. There was a lovely chemistry between Anna and the King and the rendition of Shall We Dance? was captivating. There were very ably supported by others in the cast - Adela Green as Lady Tiang, Michael Jones as the Kralahome, Jen Lewis as Tuptim, Matthew Shaw as Lun Tha and Dominic Osin as Prince Chulalongkorn. For me, the highlight of the whole show was the re-enactment of Uncle Toms Cabin. It was imaginatively choreographed, extremely well danced and performed, the make-up and costumes were excellent and the chorus singing sublime. The costumes throughout were exquisite and aided by appropriate wigs and hairpieces gave principals, chorus and children, who by the way were so adorable, a truly Siamese look. A very moving last scene brought the show to a close and apart from some sound problems this was a very memorable and outstanding production. Congratulations must go to the production team and indeed to the whole cast and crew.



FAME FOREVER - REUNION AND REBIRTH

Review by: Joyce Handbury
Presented by: **GATEPOST THEATRE COMPANY**
Venue: Guildhall Theatre, Derby
Performance Dates: March 2010
Director: Jim Baker
Musical Director: Kate Baker
Choreography: Lisa Peach, Sharon Bednall, Kate Baker

Fame Forever reveals the fate of the original cast of 'Fame' some twenty years later when the characters are now all grown up and return to celebrate the reunion of the class of '84 at La Guardia High School for the Performing Arts. One of the members, Carmen Diaz who died of a drug overdose in 1984, returns as a ghost watching over both past and present students who are in the throes of auditioning for parts in 'West Side Story'. So, we have quite an involved story-line which produces a very bitty show. However, the Director along with his Stage Manager and Stage Crew do a magnificent job in keeping the action flowing. I could go through the entire principal line-up and make almost the same comments as they all played their individual roles superbly. The singing of each and every one of them was outstanding. However I must just mention Rebecca Knight as Georgia Washington because talk about from 'Popstar to Opera Star' she excelled in both genres and her singing of 'Habanera' by Bizet was a show stopper - absolutely superb! Good choreography especially in The Tango, excellent chorus harmony singing - the Gospel Song was fabulous, a magnificent Band, brilliant principals and a terrific, rousing finale produced a great show. Excellent, congratulations to everyone involved.

DISTRICT 3

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

PHIL WILLIAMS

THE MUSIC MAN

Review by: Phil Williams
Presented by: **MANSFIELD AMATEUR OPERATIC & DRAMATIC SOCIETY**
Venue: Palace Theatre Mansfield
Performance dates: 2nd to 6th March 2010
Director: Pam Frith
Musical Director: Paul O'Leary
Choreographer: Katie Wright

Not the easiest of shows to put on but Pam directed well. There was good use of the stage area and plenty of movement, particularly in the many chorus scenes. Paul's experience ensured that the musical side had no real problems with fine performances from the pit and on stage. Theresa Stafford was in fine voice as Marian as was Judi O'Leary as Mrs Paroo, but visually the contrast in age was not apparent; perhaps a "younger style" costume for Marian might have helped. An enthusiastic performance from Jon Tatley as Harold Hill, perhaps a little more volume at times would have helped. Good performances from all of the many other characters and chorus, with some fine choral singing in the big numbers. Nice dance routines with good choreography. The costumes were fine and in period except for the pantaloons which had long gone by 1912. There was a good set, well used on stage and efficiently handled by the backstage team, enhanced by effective lighting. To the very young chorus lady in the dark dress, you were super; keep it up and you will be a future leading lady. Good family entertainment.



THE WIZARD OF OZ

Review by: Phil Williams
Presented by: **CARLTON OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Venue: Nottingham Playhouse
Performance dates: 9th to 13th March 2010
Directors: Catherine Orton & Lindsey Jaycock
Musical Director: Christopher Rees
Choreographer: Rachael Rees

The RSC version provided quite a challenge artistically and a big challenge technically, but Carlton certainly approached this with plenty of talent and enthusiasm. Artistically the production team provided a sound base for the cast to successfully develop the wide range of characters and musical numbers in this version. On stage there was a superb performance from Jessica Nicklin as Dorothy, both vocally and dramatically, she was so well suited to the part. Excellent performances as well from Jonathan Allen (Scarecrow), Simon Theobald (Lion) and Graham Ward (Tinman), while Nicola Bilton was very wicked as the Wicked Witch and Denise Palin very good as the Good Witch. All of these were well supported by the remaining cast and chorus. There were lovely performances from the Munchkins, showing plenty of emerging talent for future shows. Good costumes and a fine set and lighting enhanced the performance. Such a long show might have benefited from a few cuts although the odd technical problems with scene changes on the opening night did not help in this respect. However, overall it was very good entertainment.



DISTRICT 4

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE

ANNE KEY-HUCKERBY

STRICTLY FLAMENCO

Review by: Anne Key-Huckerby
presented by: **GAINSBOROUGH THEATRE COMPANY**
Venue: The Old Nick Theatre, Gainsborough
Performance date: 6th March 2010
Director: Bill Rodgers

Another play from GTC member, Kim Newby, and featuring her in the cast, this was most interesting and entertaining. Briefly it deals with the fortunes and various problems of a group of eight women who attend a dancing class specialising in flamenco. Their leader, Julia, is trying to raise funds to repair the roof of the village hall. By chance, a young Spaniard, Antonio, crashes his motor bike nearby and has to remain in the area for a while. Without exception the cast played their respective roles admirably. Martyn Horner-Glister was superb as Antonio, adopting a respectable foreign accent while maintaining excellent diction. Kerry Greenwood was utterly believable as Julia, Eleanor Bowker relished her pithy lines as Daisy and Dawn Horrey was delightful as the naive Val. Full marks to the actors who were responsible for all the scene changes. Their moves were carefully choreographed and had been well-rehearsed. The lighting and sound effects were excellent, the props were fine and the costumes were very suitable. Well done

THAT'S LOVE

Review by: Anne Key-Huckerby
presented by: **LOUTH PLAYGOERS**
Venue: Riverhead Theatre, Louth
Performance date: 16th March 2010
Director: Peter Maddison

A new bitter-sweet comedy by Ron Aldridge, this production found great favour with the audience. The story reveals the lives of three performers: Tony, Sarah and Frank. Via a series of flashbacks we learn how their respective hopes, dreams and aspirations were dashed and the trio disbanded. The young Sarah and Tony were very much in love, but Sarah ended up marrying Frank while Tony went solo as a comedian. We meet the trio many years later with Tony, played by David Mapletoft, now terminally ill, residing in a nursing home. David's portrayal of Tony was masterly and Margaret Neale's older Sarah was equally telling. The young Sarah and Tony (Eleanor Ordish and Connor Bannister) were very convincing while Graham Turner and William Weir were strong as the older and younger Frank. A simple set, depicting Tony's suite at the nursing home was ideally designed to transform easily to a similar abode. Good use was made of lighting throughout. On the whole the costumes were right for the times. Congratulations.

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

Review by: Anne Key-Huckerby
Presented by: **ST NICOLAS PLAYERS**
Venue: St Peter and St Paul's Church, Gosberton
Performance date: 18th March 2010
Director: Philip Bosworth

There was much to applaud in this T. S. Eliot masterpiece. The church at Gosberton provided an excellent background for the action and the use of a 'window' to depict the final demise of Thomas Becket was clever indeed. Appreciate it's hard to get the sound levels right in such circumstances; in the second half things were much better. No doubt it was First Night nerves that accounted for prompts being needed. I felt the Women of Canterbury were moved unnecessarily causing some valuable lines to be lost. Having said this the evening was memorable and truly interesting with powerful characterisations from the Four Tempters. Becket's three priests and the four Knights. Troy Melvin was masterly as Thomas, his Christmas Day sermon was really impressive. The costumes were very suitable and the lighting was dramatic. It was the first time I had seen this play. I would not have missed it for anything!

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE

Review by: Anne Key-Huckerby
presented by: Skegness Music and Drama Group
Venue: The Embassy Theatre, Skegness
Performance date: 19th March 2010
Director: Andrea Hall
Musical Director: Peter Coughtrey-Wellsted
Choreographers: Clare Allen and Cameron Hall

Congratulations to the 14-strong orchestra on coping with a particularly taxing score. While the chorus singing was a little short on power, that of the principals was very pleasing. For example, Jo Fitzwilliams shone in the title role, Lauren Garrill was excellent as Dorothy Brown and both Cameron Hall and Trevor Fenton were masterly as Jimmy Smith and Trevor Graydon respectively. The essential comedy came mainly from Mary Ali as Mrs Meers with Paul Barry and Tony Crowther (Ching Ho and Bun Foo). There were plenty of tap routines to enjoy and these showed variety and competence. The set was very pleasing and the stage staff deserve a word of praise for their efficiency. The lighting was good and the costumes were superb with great accessories. A most enjoyable evening's entertainment.

IN A MONASTERY GARDEN

Review by: Anne Key-Huckerby
Presented by: **GENERALLY G AND S**
Venue: Carr Hill School, Retford
Performance date: 20th March 2010
Artistic Director: Martin Yates

The concert was advertised as 'An Evening of Popular Favourites'. It certainly was! Peter Hent introduced the items, all of which had a floral theme, and all were sung to their usual high standard. The first half comprised solos, duets, ensembles and chorus numbers. The company was attractively attired in black with red or floral accessories. I particularly enjoyed the chorus' rendition of Sullivan's "Echoes", Birds in the Night, David Bovill and the men singing A Policeman's Lot (Pirates), newcomer Matthew Cheetham's Yeomen of England and Elgar's As Torrents in Summer. The first half concluded with In A Monastery Garden when the accompanist, John Sellars, played the whole piece through first. The second half was devoted to a very light-hearted production of 'Trial by Jury' with some quite bizarre costumes to be seen along with more conservative ones. This was extremely well done with competent principals and a strong chorus. A most memorable evening

THE FULL MONTY

Review by: Anne Key-Huckerby
Presented by: **NEWARK AOS**
Venue: Palace Theatre, Newark
Performance date: 22nd March 2010
Director: Lisa Lee
Musical Director: Hugh Casterton

Understandably the majority of the audience were women who were very vocal in their appreciation of this 'romp' of a show. I know I am not the only one who found the musical accompaniment was far too loud most of the time. Also, the diction from some of the girls was not very clear, but Vicki's 'Life with Harold' and Georgia's duet with her (You Rule my World) were well sung. Jean Robinson's 'Jeanette's Showbiz' was memorable. All six of the chaps aspiring to be male strippers played their respective roles extremely well. Their basketball routine 'Michael Jordan's Ball' was excellent. So, too, was the ultimate 'Let It Go' strip. The rest of the cast played their parts well. All the costumes were fine. The set was comprehensive and the stage hands worked efficiently. The sound and lighting effects were good. An exciting show with great appeal.

THE ANNIVERSARY

Review by: Anne Key-Huckerby
Presented by: **RETFORD LITTLE THEATRE**
Venue: Retford Little Theatre
Performance date: 25th March 2010
Director: Stephen Walker

Bill MacIlwraith's script is wonderfully funny, yet while you laugh uproariously you cannot imagine that anyone could be as dreadful as May, the matriarch of the dysfunctional family. Iris Hardwick could not be faulted as Mum, the scheming, manipulative mother of three sons. She delights in wearing her victims down with her vicious barbed comments. Her timing was immaculate. Nick Clayton, David Cox and Frank Stamp as the three sons; Tom, Henry and Terry, were excellent. So, too were Stephanie Lee as Karen, Terry's wife and Donnamarie Donnelly as Shirley, Tom's girlfriend. It would be hard to find fault with any aspect of this production for, in addition to the worthy cast, the set and lighting were to RL T's high standards and the costumes were fine. Great entertainment.

OUR HOUSE

Review by: Anne Key-Huckerby
Presented by: **HORNCASTLE THEATRE COMPANY**
Venue: The Lion Theatre, Horncastle,
Performance date: 26th March 2010
Director: Shirley Moffat with Harriet Harvey-Owen

I'm well-known for disliking bad language, but I do know what to expect in John Godber's plays. This was extremely well portrayed with Jane Pow (May) reminiscing as the furniture remover clears her house. After many years living there she is moving abroad. During the numerous flashbacks she visualises episodes in her marriage with Ted. Played by Sheena and Chris Liversidge these took in the happy times and the more sombre ones, too. We are made aware how attitudes have changed over the intervening years and the effect the miners' strike had on people's lives. The props were excellent, the set was fairly simple and the lighting and sound effects were good. With good choice of costumes reflecting the different ages {son, Jack's loons' were memorable} this was a remarkable production.

DISTRICT 5

SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE

PETER BREACH

SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS ARE WOMEN

Review by: Peter Breach
Presented by: **BOURNE PLAYERS**
Venue: Bourne Corn Exchange
Performance dates: 3rd & 4th March 2010
Directors: Margaret Rine & Nicola Dickie

This comedy play is about a group of women friends who are members of a failing book-reading group that is about to fold through lack of interest and a fall in membership. There is much humour in this play as the character of each player is developed in a light-hearted manner. However, it soon becomes apparent that all of them have significant problems in their lives. Lynn (Jane Sims) has just been deserted by her husband, Amanda (Irene Wearing) is on her third man, Jill (Verity Jackson) thinks she is pregnant by a waiter, Helen (Neena Quinlan) is in a long term relationship with her much older employer which appears to be going nowhere and Dorothy (Liz Bond) has been subjected to violence by her husband who is now in a home. They all need the group to survive if they are to continue receiving the support they derive from the meetings and their salvation comes in the persons of Steve (Mathew Coupland), a book-loving fire-fighter and Chris (Colin York), a friend of Dorothy.

The female characters in this play are required to alternate between humour and pathos and they all coped well with this. I was particularly impressed with the scene involving Jill, who desperately didn't want to be pregnant and Helen, who without speaking it, showed a realisation that her relationship was not going to provide her with this experience. This was a well-directed production, there was good characterisation from all the cast who used the stage well and delivered their lines clearly. Well-done Bourne Players!



THE KILLING OF SISTER GEORGE

Review by: Peter Breach
Presented by: **ST. PETER'S HILL PLAYERS**
Performance dates: 10th to 13th March 2010
Venue: Guildhall Arts Centre, Grantham
Director: Mel Sinnott

Written in 1964 this black comedy is a parody of the killing of Grace Archer in the long running radio series, 'The Archers'. The play features a lesbian relationship between the abusive and overbearing star of a radio soap opera and her naïve young companion 'Childie', who collects and plays with dolls. The actress June Buckridge plays Sister George, a well-liked district nurse who provides medical care and solves the personal problems of residents of Applehurst. When June learns that her character is to be written out of the show through her involvement in a fatal traffic accident she increases her gin consumption and the mistreatment of her companion 'Childie', resorting to bullying. Mrs Mercy Croft, the BBC female programme director, informs June of her dismissal and persuades Childie to move in with her.

Having lost her job and her lover June is further humiliated when offered the voice part of a cow in a forthcoming cartoon series. A case of the biter being bit!

This play has a female cast of four who all have to adopt very different personalities and those taking part in this production did extremely well at getting into character. They were required to convey powerful messages concerning female passion, sexual jealousy and betrayal, which they did very effectively. Barbara Garner as June Buckridge, Heather Carr as Alice 'Childie' McNaught, Barbara Hurst as Mrs Mercy Croft and Polly Lewis as Madame Xenia, all acquitted themselves with distinction. The set design, furniture and props contributed much to the performance, as did the efficient stage crew. Very impressive!

ORPHEUS IN THE UNDERWORLD

Review by: Peter Breach
Presented by: **THE GRANTHAM SINGERS**
Venue: The Guildhall Arts Centre, Grantham
Performance dates: 19th & 20th March 2010
Musical Director: Paul Emmett
Choreographer: Sophie Knowles

Having last seen a performance of Orpheus some 50 years ago when I was a young man endeavouring to acquire a veneer of sophistication, I went along to this production, advertised as a concert version of Jacques Offenbach's outrageously funny 'send-up' of Greek mythology, wondering whether the gods were likely to be upset when they gazed down upon the stage of the Guildhall Arts Centre. I need not have concerned myself for what they and we in the near capacity audience witnessed was a highly amusing and hilarious performance of this operetta that includes many great tunes, some very funny songs and of course, a particularly well known dance. All the principals delivered very competent performances with verve and were ably supported by an enthusiastic chorus who seemed to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. There was a good balance between the orchestra and vocalists. The female dancers gave a superb performance of the cancan, however their male counterparts were somewhat less graceful and seemed to be lacking in stamina! Sorry chaps but I think you need some more practice. This fantastic team effort produced an evening of brilliant entertainment. Congratulations to everyone involved, especially Hannah Coleman who stepped in to play the part of Calliope only a couple of days before the performance.

OLIVER

Review by: Peter Breach
Presented by: **LINCOLN AMATEUR OPERATIC & DRAMATIC SOCIETY**
Performance dates: 30th March to 10th April 2010
Venue: Lincoln Theatre Royal
Director: Matthew Hewitt
Musical Director: David Williams
Choreographer: Jane Flanagan

For nearly 50 years this show has been extremely popular with performers and audiences alike, so how do you ensure good audience figures for a two-week run, especially as many people will have seen a performance before? Well LAODS's answer, under the direction of Matthew Hewitt, was to present their version with such freshness and enthusiasm as if it were the opening night of a brand new show. Lionel Bart's tunes were extremely well played by the band and the balance between them and the vocalists was such that it was a treat to hear all of the well-penned lyrics. From curtain-up every player who came on stage gave a dedicated performance, irrespective of their part - the exuberant though disciplined activities by the large chorus of youngsters was particularly commendable. At the time the original show was launched there was tremendous competition to attract audiences away from live theatre to television that had the benefit of re-takes and editing facilities which could provide instant scene changes not available to stage performances. However, what we experienced from LAODS was as near a seamless production as possible, thanks to the efforts of a very efficient stage crew. All who took part in this team effort will know from the responses of the audience just how well the performance was received. Congratulations to everyone involved in providing such splendid entertainment.

THE ACCRINGTON PALS

Review by: Peter Breach
Presented by: **SLEAFORD LITTLE THEATRE**
Venue: The Playhouse, Sleaford
Performance dates: 24th to 27th March 2010
Director: Sue Robey

The Accrington Pals was the choice of Sleaford Little Theatre for their 60th anniversary production. The play is based on a real life event which saw a huge number of young men from the Accrington area respond to the call to enlist and fight in the First World War but their military careers were short lived as most were slaughtered at the battle of the Somme. It is a very testing play in that it requires the actors to go through the experience of a roller coaster ride of emotions and for these emotions to be conveyed so strongly that the audience accompanies them - this certainly was achieved in this production. Under the skilled direction of Sue Robey every member of the cast lived their parts, the men who went off to fight and the women who stayed behind. Young Oliver Harrod, who was making his debut with SLT, performed well as the only juvenile in this production. The stage at the Playhouse is not particularly large but the cleverly designed and constructed sets covered the domestic and battle front locations extremely well. Considerable thought and attention had been given to the costumes that added much to the



performance. The lighting, sound and pyrotechnic effects produced a very realistic battlefield environment. I am sure all who were involved in this production and those who saw it will remember it for years to come for, besides being their 60th anniversary production, this really was a superb performance of Peter Whelan's play.

DISTRICT 6A

NORTH LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND

MARTIN TAILBY

WAIT UNTIL DARK

Review by: Roy Smith
Presented by: **FESTIVAL PLAYERS**
Venue: Loughborough Town Hall
Performance dates: 30th September to 3rd October 2009
Director: Pauline Inkley

This is a taut thriller where a strong cast, combined with a well conceived set by Andrew McGowan and atmospheric lighting beautifully sustained the mounting suspense as the complicated plot unravelled. Laura Orton gave a very convincing performance as the blind girl, harassed by three unscrupulous criminals posing as police officers, played with assurance by Nick Grainger, Jeremy Malpas and particularly nasty Steve Illidge, all of whom were desperate to find a doll containing a consignment of drugs. Well directed by Pauline Inkley.

CRAZY FOR YOU

Review by: Philip Brown
Presented by: **CHRISTCHURCH THEATRE CLUB**
Venue: Loughborough Town Hall
Performance dates: 24th to 30th January 2010
Director: John Lewin
Musical Director: Vicki Hing
Choreographer: Ruth Chadwick

Once again this was a great production from John Lewin. The first to celebrate their 40 years. Michael Gamble as Bobby Child gave an outstanding performance. Lucy Brown as Polly Baker was well suited to the part, her performance was very professional. Duncan Gadsby gave a slick, well polished performance as Lank Hawkins. An extremely confident Julie Easter as Irene. Liz Berrisford in the cameo role of Bobby's mother was beautifully played. Lee Costelow as Bela Zangler was perfect for the part, excellent timing. Daniel Beniston and Lorraine Trott were well matched as Eugene and Patricia Fodor. Costumes and sets were as always excellent. Choreography and musical direction were extremely well executed. Chorus of Follies Girls and Cowboys danced and sang their way through was has to be one of the Gershwin's best scores. Well done to a top rate production team who have produced one of the best shows I have seen for a long time. Best of luck with your next production Footloose.

SEASONS GREETINGS

BY ALAN AYCKBOURN

Review By: Roy Smith
Presented by: **THE FESTIVAL PLAYERS**
Venue: Loughborough Town Hall
Performance dates: 17th to 20th February 2010
Directed by: Mary Baird.

The splendid multi-roomed set with its Christmas decorations, designed by Andrew McGowan, made a welcome sight on a cold night. The acting was of a high standard but as much of Ackbourne's comedy comes from the interplay between the personalities of the characters, a stronger direction would have helped. The cast coped particularly well with the varied dialogues going on in the different rooms with Eddie Orton and Lis Berrisford giving strong well-timed comic performances. The 'awful' puppet show was well handled by Chris Nixon and proved to be a highlight of the evening.

OKLAHOMA!

Review by: Martin Tailby
Presented by: **ASHBEIAN MUSICAL THEATRE GROUP**
Venue: Ashby Ivanhoe College
Date: 23rd to 27th March 2010
Director: David McKnight
Musical Director: Howard Marriott
Choreographer: Deborah Wilson & Leanne O'Brien

A good production of this Rogers and Hammerstein classic. This production was interesting and suited the company well. Super cast with Samuel Hutchinson as Curly, Emily Watson as Laurey complimented each other superbly. Angela Bithell as Ado Annie teamed up with Richard Craggs as Will Parker to give us a great comedy duo. All the other parts were equally as good. Excellent Aunt Eller, Karen Jamieson. Jonny Dagley as Ali Hakim gave a good performance. A suitable, menacing Jud Fry from Chris Head. Well choreographed ballet, large confident chorus, good orchestra, lovely vibrant costumes. The show had all the ingredients for a first rate show. The audience loved it, it just proves that these standard shows are what the public want to see. Thanks for a lovely evening. Best of luck with your next show Half a Sixpence.

MY FAIR LADY

Review by: Chris Clarke
Presented by: **LOUGHBOROUGH AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Venue: Loughborough Town Hall
Performance dates: 16th to 20th March 2010
Producer: Jean Gemmell
Musical Director: Dereck Hunter
Choreographer: Jeanette Patrick-Cooper

Keith Reynolds as Henry Higgins gave a very flamboyant performance and was ably supported by an excellent Col. Pickering. Eliza's cockney accent on the first night was not sustained but more than made up for it when she became a lady. Adrian Dobson as Freddie sang the well known songs to a very acceptable standard.

The show was well costumed and the sets were excellent. The orchestra, which was large, under the direction of Dereck Hunter played to perfection.

THE LIKES OF US

Review by: Chris Clarke
Presented by: **MARKET HARBOROUGH MUSICAL THEATRE**
Venue: The Octagonal Theatre Welland Park College.
Performance dates: 23rd to 27th March 2010
Producer: Peter Darnell
Musical Director: Gillian Bindley

Having seen The Likes of Us twice before this was the first time I had seen it narrated by one person. Lorna Rodber did a fine job giving it a touch of the Joyce Grenfell's. The story is very weak but Michael Graves and Sarah Pickering as Barnardo & Syrie did add some very pleasant singing to the evening. The orchestra does have to be commended under the baton of Gillian Bindley, always supportive of the singers yet never intrusive. The single set worked well for the whole evening. Worthy of mention is young James Barry, who I am sure has a good stage future ahead of him.

WORKING

Review by: Martin Tailby
Presented by: **TINHATTERS**
Venue: Concordia Theatre, Hinckley
Performance Dates: 22nd to 27th March 2010
Director: Chris and Christine Clarke
Choreographer: Caroline Mogford-Walsh
Musical Director: Tony Rifugiato

This was an interesting evening's entertainment. Good direction and choreography, good lighting. An excellent set made by the company. Scenery changes were all extremely slick and worked well. The show was what it says 'Working'. Depicting many different trades and businesses but all about people working. For example we had checkouts in supermarkets, we had waiters and waitresses in restaurants. We had firemen, truckers, cleaners, housewives all with an individual cameo performance to tell us about their job. With excellent choreography and singing to suit each profession. One of the highlights was Zoe Pearson-Clarke housewife number 'Just a Housewife'. All the company seemed to be thoroughly enjoying the show as did the audience and is a great show to look at as it can be as large or as small as you want. The musical numbers, though unknown, hold your interest and are varied. A good evening's entertainment. Good to see a new show. Best of luck with your next show One Night Only with the Tinhatters at their best.

GIGI

Review by: Kevin Sheen
Presented by: **WELLINGBOROUGH AMATEUR OPERATIC & DRAMATIC SOCIETY**
Venue: The Castle, Wellingborough
Performance dates: 3rd to 6th February 2010
Director: Ray Jeffery

Overall this was a very nice, all round production of a lovely show with subtle humour throughout. Having said that some of the humour was unfortunately lost through slow or slightly ill-timed delivery. It was very well directed by Ray Jeffery (I particularly liked his use of tableaux to create the feel of the piece) and entertained from start to finish.

The orchestra, led by Keith Green, was impressive throughout and got the show off to a professional start (some lovely, gently audible tones coming from the bassoon at times) with the core performers following suit. The costumes, wigs and scenery were very impressive and visually the show was spot on though I would prefer the male dancers not to wear 'dance trainers' on stage – especially when wearing evening suits.

It was noticeable that the company seemed to lack some energy at times and though individuals picked up the pace when performing their respective supporting roles the show would have benefitted from the company focussing and performing as a whole.

The part of Honore Lachailles was extremely well played by Shaun Johnson. He did well to avoid falling into the trap of trying to mimic Maurice Chevalier and, though there was a hint of him in 'Thank heaven for little girls', Shaun made the part his own.

Rachel Compton (Gigi) did extremely well to balance the 'little girl' role with the 'developing woman' character Gigi becomes. Add to that her singing voice and it made a delightful performance. She was more than matched by Brett Hanson (Gaston Lachailles). This was another seemingly effortless performance by Brett who impresses me more each time I see him. Very well done Sir.

Caroline Cox (Mamita) and Glenda Biggs (Aunt Alicia) were very well cast. The characters grew on me with each scene and entertained faultlessly. They are two superb characters that were superbly portrayed. Well done to both.

PRINCESS IDA

Review by: Michael Williamson (Eastern Region District 1 Representative)
Presented by: **OUNDLÉ GILBERT AND SULLIVAN PLAYERS**
Venue: Queen Victoria Hall, Oundle
Performance date: 27th February 2010
Producer: Gill Potts
Musical Director: Kate Wishart

The production was a traditional one with a significant emphasis on good chorus work and it was an appropriate choice for the Society's first performance in the splendidly refurbished Queen Victoria Hall. Supported by attractive scenery and costumes, and some convincing props, the overall impression was very good and the large chorus moved quietly yet dramatically in order to achieve the maximum effect. The complex Act 2 Finale was particularly well done and reflected great credit on the whole company. There were some excellent individual performances including a fierce King Hildebrand from Stephen Oliver and some cleverly managed comedy from Chris Jackson, Chris Knight and Ian Potts as the three heroes. They were well matched by the impressive, moustachioed sons of King Gama, played with commendable gravity by Dave Raftery, Bernie McDonnell and Barry Jackson. Keith Moore, as King Gama himself, had a strong voice and a keen sense of timing which helped to make this a memorable interpretation. The ladies were all well cast with charming performances from both Venetia Anderson and Alex Steel as Lady Psyche and Melissa respectively. Marilyn Oliver made a magnificent Lady Blanche and it was pleasing to note that 'Come mighty must', often cut out, had been retained within the score. Marilyn's competent delivery of all her numbers made this addition a particular pleasure. However, all productions of 'Princess Ida' tend to depend largely upon the successful casting of the eponymous lead and, in this respect, the Society was very lucky to be able to call on the services of Marian Porter who both sang and acted to perfection. A delightful performance of some depth and, altogether, a very competent production of this classic operetta.

THE WEIR

Review by: Kevin Sheen
Presented by: **CYTRINGAN PLAYERS**
Venue: The Studio Theatre, Wellingborough
Performance dates: 10th to 13th March 2010
Director: Rowena Fowler

This performance was approaching (and sometimes surpassing) professional throughout. The set was impressive, the performances more so. The casting was spot on; the accents mostly convincing; the lighting impressively subliminal at times. This production has set a benchmark for other to attain – it WAS that good. 'Yes' there were a few pauses to recall lines or fill in but these were indeed 'few'. Very well done to all.

It would be churlish of me to lavish praise on any one individual's performance. Suffice to say Vince Perry (Jack), David Mander (Brendan), David Hales (Jim), Patrick Mulrennan (Finbar) and Sarah Stringer (Valerie) deserve all the plaudits that come their way. They performed both as individuals and as a team and they followed their Director (Rowena Fowler) to bring the audience into being part of the show without them realising it. I particularly liked the slow fading of the lights during Valerie's tale and the way Jim constantly avoided eye contact with the other characters which forced him to face the audience when telling his. Extremely well Directed and performed.

THE MIKADO

Review by: Nanette Lovell
Presented by: **LEICESTER GILBERT AND SULLIVAN OPERATIC SOCIETY**
Venue: Leicester Little Theatre
Director: Stephen Bruce
Musical Director: Sandra Tebbutt
Choreographer: Leanne Wesley-Gibbs

I always enjoy a production of The Mikado even more so when it is set in the roaring 20's. A black and white theme is always effective especially so when it is used throughout the show. A very strong set of leading characters - not possible to mention everyone although I wish I could! A great performance by David Lovell as 'Ko-Ko' who bounced onto the stage and kept the show going at a terrific pace. His "list" song was brilliant and greatly appreciated by the local audience! Daniel Neal (Nanki-Poo) and Michelle Martin (Yum-Yum) made a suitably love-lorn couple with some lovely duets. A strong 'Mikado' by Graham Austen and a great comic performance from Byron Greenhow as 'Poo-Bar' all added to the enjoyment. Sonja Greenhow made a great 'Katisha' who was determined a get a man at any cost! Karen Gordon as 'Pitti-Sing' made the most of her role as a 1920's flapper! Strong support from the cameo roles and the ensemble together with excellent singing throughout added to the overall enjoyment. Superb orchestra led by M.D. Sandra Tebbutt and tight direction by Stephen Bruce ensured the action never flagged. A good set and excellent costumes all added up to a great night out and a production that you can all be proud of - well done.

"UTOPIA LTD"

Review by Nanette Lovell
Presented by: **WOLVERTON G & S SOCIETY**
Venue: Stantonbury Campus Theatre
Performance date: 26th March 2010
Director: Graham Breese
Musical Director: Mike Crofts

What a great way to spend an evening on a South Sea Island with a bevy of beautiful maidens together with their brave warriors. This was the first time I had seen Utopia and I wonder why more G & S groups don't produce this piece of theatrical entertainment - great fun for all. A strong set of principals led by Graham Breeze as the King who was well supported by Cath Bromley as Lady Sophy - some great duets with the King! The young lovers were excellently played by Will Dyson and Susan Dixon (Fitz and Zara) their voices blended wonderfully together. The many supporting roles were well played and there was some great singing from the chorus. A superb orchestra kept the show moving along at a cracking pace. All in all a really good evening's entertainment. Congratulations to everyone involved - another success for Wolverton G & S Society !