

Oxfordshire Drama Network



Newsletter

JUNE 2023

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

This edition has a lot of reviews to read, so this gives us a chance to find out how other groups perform.

There are also the results of the Winter Festival, and the awards presented at the AGM.

We're looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our Drama Festival next week. It's a chance to see some good plays, and meet like-minded thespians. The Unicorn is also a unique theatrical venue, if you've never seen a play there, come and enjoy the experience.

Mike Davies.



CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Although it's struggling to feel like summer at the moment, I'm really looking forward to welcoming as many of you as possible to the ODN summer drama festival of one act plays in the stunning Unicorn theatre next week.

We have a fantastic line up of plays performed by member groups from all corners of the county so do please come along and support them. The Corn Exchange Festival in Wallingford is also back, after a short break, later on this month, and I can't wait to be part of it. Festivals are a time to come together and celebrate, so come along, enjoy a drink at the bar and a chat with fellow drama enthusiasts and enjoy some good community theatre.

If you're not festival'd out by the end of June, the National Drama Festival is being held at the Albany Theatre in Coventry 20-23rd July and drama groups from all over the country and some from Europe will be performing some of the highest quality plays on the festival circuit this year. We were lucky enough to have 2 plays from our Oxfordshire family perform in last year's National Festival and maybe one of the plays performing next week will also be selected. Some plays have already been announced and the full line up and running order will be decided in a couple of weeks so do check out their website for details - www.ndfa.co.uk - or follow the facebook page: www.facebook.com/NationalDramaFestivalsAssociation

In addition to the plays, adjudicators from GoDA will also be running a couple of sessions to give you tips on plays, directing and generally what adjudicators look for. It should be a fantastic weekend and a great way to celebrate the end of the festival season.

Talking of celebrations - two of our member groups are celebrating milestones this year, which shouldn't go unmentioned. Congratulations to both Sinodun Players on reaching 75 years and Didcot Phoenix celebrating 40 years - long may they continue!

Karen Carey (Chair)

Facebook www.facebook.com/groups/1324585987569767

Email: info@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org

Instagram: www.instagram.com/oxfordshiredramanetwork



WHAT'S ON DIARY (details inside)

JUNE

1-3 Bicester Choral & Op. Soc. **The Addams Family**

1-3 *Wychwood Players* **Canary Cage & Women Only**

5-10 **ODN Festival of One Act Plays**

10-11 *OxOps* **On The Steps Of The Palace**

16,17 Wantage Sings

23,24 **The 90's, A Concert.**

20-23 *Wallingford* **One-Act Drama Festival**

JULY

11-16 The Sinodun Players **A Bunch of Amateurs**

11-15 *Thame Players* **Tom Jones**

12-15 Banbury Cross Players **Things I Know to be True**

15,16 *Launton Village Players*
Come Rain or Shine a Summer Variety Show

19-22 Blewbury Players, **Shakespeare In Love.**

22 *Bicester C.O.S.* **Twist & Shout - A concert**

AUGUST

3-5 AmEgos Theatre **Young Frankenstein**

OCTOBER

24-28 *Abingdon O.S.* **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang**

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ODN Festival of One Act Plays

Tuesday 6th to Saturday 10th June

A unique union
of entertainment
and talent at the
fabulous Unicorn
Theatre



LIST OF PLAYS on in the week

Tuesday 6th June 7.30 start

Getting Dark by Joe Graham

Banbury Cross Players

Anyone Can Dance by Sean Baker

Kingston Bagpuize Drama Group

Wednesday 7th June 7.30 start

Green Forms by Alan Bennett

St Peters Players

Victoria Station by Harold Pinter

St Peters Players

Thursday 8th June 7.30 start

No Prime Minister by Emma Gardner

Didcot Phoenix

The Timid Twosome

by Eugene Labiche (Translated by Chris Harris)

Sinodun Players

Friday 9th June 7.30 start

Away With the Fairies by Sue Hadley

Drayton Players

'Blue' by Heather Dunmore

BODs (Wychwood)

Saturday 10th June 7.30 start

Gala Night

3 Plays from the week chosen by our adjudicator
Nancy Heath - followed by the Awards

The first week in June brings drama of a different kind to Abingdon. The Oxfordshire Drama Network presents its annual theatre festival of one act plays at the Unicorn Theatre, which is situated in the Abbey Buildings, Checker Walk, Abingdon OX14 3HZ.

Now in its **Thirty Eighth year** the 36th Festival unites some of the best of the drama groups in Oxfordshire to give their all in entertaining discerning local theatre goers.

The uniqueness comes from the fact that this festival is the **only one nationally** which incorporates workshops at the end of each play by a professional adjudicator. It is also a springboard for the talented playwrights of the county.

The festival was the original idea of Jean Sutherland, Tony and Jackie Heath and was set up to help raise the standard of the amateur theatre in Oxfordshire

The adjudicator for the festival is Nancy Heath, a member of GODA (the Guild of Drama Adjudicators)

This year eight entries have been submitted from all over Oxfordshire from Banbury Cross Player in the North to Sinodun Players in the south. The Festival culminates in a gala night on the final Saturday, which consists of three plays chosen by the adjudicator for a fabulous feast of entertainment.

Don't miss this opportunity to see great talent in one of the most charming of venues.

Tickets Tue to Fri £10 (£8 conc <18 or >65)

Saturday (3 plays) £12 (£10 conc <18 or >65)

To book tickets in advance see:-

www.ticketsource.co.uk/Oxfordshire-Drama-Network

or The Bookstore in the precinct, Abingdon

or Tel 01235 821351

Special offer:-

4 nights Tue to Fri for £35 (£28 conc)

(Season ticket holders also get to vote for the Punters' Prize!)

Unicorn Theatre,

Chequer Walk, Abingdon, OX14 3HZ.

A promotional banner for the National Drama Festival. It features a circular logo with a white unicorn head on a dark background, surrounded by the text 'NATIONAL Drama FESTIVAL' and 'THE CREAM OF AMATEUR THEATRE'. To the right, it says 'FEATURING 14 OUTSTANDING PLAYS FROM THE WORLD OF AMATEUR THEATRE' with five stars and 'National Drama Festivals Association (NDFA)'. At the bottom, it includes a QR code, the dates '20TH - 23RD JULY 2023', the location 'THE ALBANY THEATRE COVENTRY', the website 'WWW.NDFA.CO.UK', and the NDFA logo.



The Corn Exchange Wallingford will host their **One-Act Drama Festival** between Tuesday June 20 and Friday June 23, 2023. It will be adjudicated by Cherry Stephenson.

The running order for the Wallingford festival is:-

Tuesday 20th June

Sinodun Players *The Timid Twosome*
 Didcot Phoenix *No Prime Minister*

Wednesday 21st June

Didcot Phoenix *The Never-Ending Night of Dr Galvan*
 Didcot Phoenix *Virtual Reality*

Thursday 22nd June

Compton Players *In Her Defence*
 Drayton Players *Away with the Fairies*

Friday 23rd June

Kingston Bagpuize *Anyone Can Dance*
 BODS (Wychwood) *Blue*

More information can be found at www.cornexchange.org.uk/drama-festival.

The National Drama Festivals Association (NDFA)

would like to wish the very best of luck to all groups within ODN who are participating in upcoming theatre festivals. Any production from an NDFA-affiliated festival that scores over 90 points will be eligible to compete in the National Drama Festival run by the NDFA between 20th – 23rd July in Coventry, where the best amateur theatre will be showcased. Any production scoring over 80 points will be invited to apply.

For the first time ever, the festival will be held over a long weekend. Plus, we've put together a range of ticket pricing options which we think you'll like, and we're looking into accommodation for you to choose from too.

The National Drama Festival is the place to see the cream of British amateur theatre. Groups from across the country (and abroad), bring their best work in friendly competition with the aim of winning awards and becoming national champions. It is



one of the prestige annual events in this country's amateur theatre calendar.

Some plays have already been announced but a full list of plays performing will be posted on the website here:-

www.ndfa.co.uk/national-drama-festival/the-plays

The Vice Chair of GoDA and adjudicator, Sue Doherty, will also be running 2 sessions free of charge to anyone with a session ticket on Saturday and Sunday to talk about various aspects of adjudicating, the marking system and giving hints and tips. Also, with so many original plays being entered into festivals these days, she will talk about the pitfalls of performing unpublished works which will be of great interest to budding authors and directors. Both sessions will end with Q&A.

Pantomime/Winter Festival Results 2022/2023

Best Front of House	Launton Village Players
Best Programme	Kingston Bagpuize
Best Costume	Sinodun Players
Technical Award	Launton Village Players
Choreography	Jess Ebberson (Kennington)
Music	Launton Village Players
Best Chorus	Kennington
Rising Star	William Gofton (BODS)
Best Comedy Perf	Kate Belcher (KBDG)
Best Dame	Dan Sears (KBDG)
Best Baddie	Eve Winterbottom as Amazonia (St Peters Players)
Best Cameo	Pete Drury for 3 parts (St P.P.)
Best Lead Perf	Mark Jessey as Scrooge (BODS)
Magic Moment	Penguin Scene (Launton)
Best overall show	A Christmas Carol – BODS
Runner up (second best overall show)	pJack and the (Sinodun Players)

The awards Presentation took place at the AGM on 14th April - see next page for photos of Karen Carey our chairman (one of the Judges) presenting the awards.



Winter Festival Awards 2023



Front of House - Launton



Choreography - Jess Ebberson (KADS)



Best Comedy Perf. - Kate Belcher KBDG



Best Chorus - KBDG



Best Baddie - Eve Winterbottom StP



Rising Star - William Gofton, BODS



Overall Winner - BODS



Best Lead Role - Mark Jessey, BODS



Magic Moment - Launton (Penguins scene)



Best Cameo - Pete Drury, St Peters



Best Dame - Dan Sears, KBDG



Music Award - Launton Village Players



Technical Award - Launton



Tips for Directors

Six Horrible, Awful, Terrible Mistakes I've Made as a Director

By Jon Jory

Jon Jory is the author of five plays with Pioneer Drama Service. As the Producing Director at Actors Theatre of Louisville, I directed over 125 plays and produced over 1,000 during my 32-year tenure, and even received a Special Tony Award for my work in regional theatre. Despite all that, I've made some awful, terrible mistakes as a director.

Here are six of them:

1. Blocking too late in the process

Now, just so I don't make the mistake of not defining the term, blocking is when and where actors move and what they do when they get there. My horrible mistake here was when the blocking process was finished too late in the rehearsal process and didn't leave sufficient time to work on the acting of the text. Eventually I made a hard and fast rule for myself that the blocking of the play or musical (dances and songs included) must absolutely—no kidding around—be finished at the latest halfway to the technical rehearsals. Thus, when we worked on a three-week-to-tech schedule, I would always, without exception, finish blocking in ten days, leaving eleven days to concentrate on the acting. Of course, your schedule will be different than mine since I was working five hours daily on rehearsal, but the point remains: finish blocking no later than halfway through your rehearsal schedule up to tech rehearsals. Eventually, I came to believe this was so important that when guest directors were hired, I sought agreement to this rule.

2. Talking too much to actors

I tend to talk too much and not specifically enough. Talking to an actor about their role in a scene without any specifics from one of their lines is like trying to fly a kite in a rainstorm. Only specifics truly create improvement. So I've learned to pick a line or speech in Scene One, and I describe the situation in which the line is said, the intent of the line, and the current situation of the character saying it. Then, I start the scene three lines before that speech and continue until three lines after. I run that sequence three times and then move on. The magic is that a breakthrough on a single speech often improves the whole scene. As a general note, I ask the stage manager to keep a stop watch and say "time" if I have talked for more than three minutes. If you can't say it in three minutes, it probably can't be said.



3. Thinking I'm not allowed to say the line for the actor

Too many times I've wanted to just say the line for the actor, only to have a voice inside my head tell me to stop. I've learned not to listen to that voice anymore. If discussing the moment and the situation does not produce a positive result, say two sentences of the line for the actor. The idea that actors resent this is considerably overblown. If in my 50-year career actors have not asked me a thousand times, "Just say it for me," I would eat my hat... if I owned one.



4. Not giving any notes to someone after a run-through

You'd think an actor would like not getting any notes after a run-through, but trust me, it's a disconcerting feeling to listen to everyone else get notes... except you. Unless you are doing a large-cast musical, every actor must get at least one note lest they think their creativity is unimportant. Check your notes against the call list before you give them.

5. Saying "faster and louder" too often

The problem with calling out "Faster and louder" as a directorial tool is that it's too general when the goal of every actor in every play is specificity. You can definitely say "faster" for a three- or four-line sequence, but not for anything longer. Lee Strasberg, the great acting teacher, once told me, "The mind only absorbs at the point of change." This being so, variety is the necessity, not a steady "faster and louder."

6. Not breaking down the call sheet

You can't over-generalize, like writing, "1:00-3:00 pm – Acting." The call sheet needs to be broken down into specifics. Granted, you can say, "1:00-4:00 pm – Run play," but other than that, your schedule should be as specific as possible: "2:00-3:00 pm – Pages 27-30, 3:00-5:00 pm – Pages 40-47." Of course, the call sheet should also list the actors called for each time period. And as a side note here, I think run-throughs are often overused as a substitute for specific work. My goal is always three full run-throughs before tech. More than that is usually a giveaway that the director doesn't know what to do with the time.

Did you notice the common thread running through many of these? I truly believe that the journey of my 50-year professional directing career has basically been a journey from generalities to specifics.

from www.pioneerdrama.com

REVIEWS

KINGSTON BAGUIZE D.G.

ALADDIN by Dave Crump

19th November 2022

This was a pantomime of surprises. More of that later. The scenery set the right tone for the pantomime as Old Peking. The opening song 'Old Peking' was amazing with the model aspects of the city being passed across the stage by the chorus. A technique which was later used very successfully during the magic carpet ride. Abanaza (Mark Padbury) whose entrance was greeted by boos which followed him throughout the show. His performance was very effective and quite despicable.

Aladdin was splendidly played by Emily Eastham who was a good match for Princess Ying Yui (Abbi Hale). Both had pleasing, blending singing voices.

Tong (Sarah Curran) and Chong (Fiona Eaton) went down very well with the children in the audience; their energy and their antics were greatly appreciated. The Emperor, Ian Strange, was solid in his performance and matched by his regal dignity throughout. Chai hung (Deb Didcock) was very effective as companion to the Princess. The two Genie's were very effective both in their individual styles Ginny, (Genie of the Ring) popped up in all sorts of places and the Genie of the Lamp brilliantly played by Sally Lacey, was a complete surprise! Firstly, traditionally, we not expecting a female genie and, secondly an ardent feminist to boot, with a lugubrious attitude. Aladdin's brother, Wishee Washee (Kate Belcher) was well cast and played to the kids in the audience. Widow Twankey (Dan Sears) was the first bearded dame I have encountered. He was certainly the star of the show and played his part very convincingly and attempts to get off with male members of the audience failed miserably. After a while you didn't even notice the beard (or the hairy chest).

The scene changes were slick and the lighting and sound effects were very good. The band was skilful and provided excellent backing for the singers. The chorus was very involved in the action and a great support to the action. The 'Magic Carpet' scene was very effective, with a model being transported across the stage on a carpet, while various notable landmarks passed by courtesy of the chorus.

A lot of hard work had gone into the production of this high standard and congratulations are due to all on stage and behind the scenes for an excellent show.

Nigel James.

ST PETER' PLAYERS Hansel and Gretel

3rd December 2022

This original pantomime has so many scenes and myriad characters, it is a job to know where to begin.

It is a traditional story with a modern twist. Hansel (Isaac Alcock) is a keen video gamer and Gretel (Catherine McCosker) is a social media wannabe. Their parents are anxious to have their offspring move out of the house and so arrange to leave them in the woods., which is where their problems start. They encounter the bad fairy Amazonia brilliantly played by Eve Winterbottom together with her servant Slimy Primeevilly-played by Nick Fiddian and her assorted helpers. They are taken to Amazonia's Spell Room, but manage to escape, thanks to the help of the friendly Magpies. On the way they meet a random collection of characters who help them on their way and eventually return home. The Good Fairy Lilac Bloomers was well played by Steve Jones with many changes of costume.

Although confusing, the panto was very well constructed and produced. We were guided through 18 scenes and 22 characters, all of whom added their bit to the puzzling story.

The young chorus were very good.

The scenes were good and well thought out. The Sweet factory machine in the gingerbread cottage was a stroke of genius.

There were some very good performances and the chorus supported the principals very well, once you could sort out who was who.

The live band was very good, as were the sound effects.

It was a most enjoyable performance and congratulations to all concerned.

Nigel James

KENNINGTON A.D.S.

ALADDIN by Tom Walley

3 February 23

I was a little surprised to see only two male principals in the programme; the Genie and the Emperor but it worked very well!

Aladdin (Natasha Watts) was very robust in her portrayal of the lead. She had a good singing voice and related well to Wishee Washee (Louise Onslow-Major) and Princess Jasmine (Rachael Peel). Wishee Washee was very energetic and expressive, with good audience interaction. She was a good foil to Widow Twankey (Hannah Gordon) who played the dame with aplomb, as good as any male dame I have seen. She made the character her own and even though she fluffed

her song, she recovered well and made it all part of the act. She delivered the jokes and innuendos brilliantly. The Spirit of the Ring (Paige Morley) was firm, but with a sweet touch, popping up from everywhere.

The Genie of the lamp (David Buckmaster) had good presence but his assumed American accent resulted him in losing clarity and he built his part up a little too much. Abanaza (Amy Wilson) was believable and very effectively evil and as the villain Abanaza. She kept her characterization throughout. The Emperor (Dan Boucher) was solid in his portrayal. So Shy (Rebecca Velickovic) lived up to her name but had good stage presence.

The sets were imaginative particularly The Cave of Jewels and changes were slick. There were a good number of costume changes. The lighting was good and the flying carpet scene was very effective, but was far too short to enable us to enjoy the spectacle. The chorus was amazing in terms of singing and dancing and their choreography was very good. My one comment was that there were a few too many songs (any excuse and they broke into song).

Overall, the show was very well directed with a very large cast. The music was excellent throughout.

A very enjoyable show (even though it the audience suffered a drenching at the hands of Widow Twankey)

Nigel James

LAUNTON VILLAGE PLAYERS

Hickery Dickery Dock

18th February 2023

This original story and concept was very cleverly executed by the company. It was not a case of adapted a well-worn story, but starting from scratch and it worked very well.

The original songs were good and all credit to Steve Webber for writing all the songs.

The pre-show music was accompanied by the mouse in the clock appearing in all sorts of places, much to the delight of the younger audience.

The opening scene of the clock tower and the Pixie of the Clock (Chris Cook) set the scene well and introduced us to the various characters. His dance with the mice was a sight to behold. Dancing by the chorus was a bit stiff, but enthusiastic. Dame Lily (Tom Penhallow) and her sandwich cart were very good giving rise to an original song about cheese. King Wonderful (Mark Hudson) was suitably evil in his desire for absolute power. While Tom (Daisy Ash) the hero of the

story was well portrayed, if a little quiet in her delivery and singing. As he travels to the four corners of the world accompanied by Dame Lily, in search of the pieces of the clock's cog he encounters an assortment characters. He is accompanied by the two stooges Dick (Rod Fine) and Dock (Dan Chilvers) who are sent to keep an eye on them. In their visits to the Wild West, the North Pole, South Pole and a tropical island, they meet an assortment of characters with choruses of elves and penguins (which just kept on coming). All scenes were played with enthusiasm and feeling, collecting the four parts of the cog to repair the clock. The King orders that no person shall approach the clock to repair it, thus extending his evil reign. However the Pixie of the Clock arranges for the mice to perform the repair which was performed very well and the clock is able to strike 'one' to end the tyranny of King Wonderful. The audience song was well organised and well received.

The whole show was very well performed and the enormous cast were well marshalled by Director Julia West. The costumes were amazing in their quantity and quality. The enjoyment of all ages was evident, including being soaked with water guns at one point.

Well done for another amazing show.

Nigel James

KINGSTON BAGPUIZE D.G.

Cheshire Cats by Gail Young

20-22 April 2023

This play is fast moving, funny and touching, with a mixture of all aspects throughout. It has its highs and lows, being punctuated by brilliant cameos of the people met along the route of the walk. Good effects were created by a blank stage and good use of props.

Based on a true story, the play tells of the fund-raising efforts of a group of ladies from Cheshire, who are preparing to undertake the half marathon MoonWalk in London.

The group are led by the incredibly loud and bossy Hilary, brilliantly played by Deb Didcock, who attempts to whip the rest of the group into shape for the walk, whilst jealously guarding her role of leader and coach. Tasha Padbury was very effective in playing the wilting Maggie who was struggling to keep up with the rest of the others. Siobhan (Fiona Eaton) was the sensible one of the group who always tried to keep the rest of the girls in order. She was confident at maintaining her slightly dour composure, when all of the group were messing around. Lucinda Ramm was

excellent as the love-lorn Vicky, a divorcee looking for romance. She finds her match in Andrew (Dan Sears) who gets dragged along to join in the walk when one of the original girls pulls out. He was a little hesitant, at first, but grew in confidence as the play proceeded. Dan played his part with enthusiasm, possibly, a little too enthusiastically at times, nearly knocking Vicky off her feet but had good asides and expressions. Vicky was believable at trying to encourage others to prepare themselves for the walk. Yvonne (Claire Wheeler) was very strong and convincing with her foot problems, which she maintained throughout, but forgot when being seduced by the 'friendly drunk'. Susan Curran, although only seen briefly, was very effective as the aerobics instructor.

The punctuation throughout the play of the race officials and others encountered along the way were a delight. Their injection of wit and comic timing were superb. Not least of which was the Debonaire Drunk (Ian Strange) His was one of the best drunk performances I have ever seen. It is all too easy to go over-the-top with drunk actions, but this was pitched just right. The other officials, although short in duration, were very good, in character with some good, comic moments.

Overall, a well-directed performance with great lighting and sound effects. It was good to see many newcomers to the group.

Nigel James

BARTHOLOMEW PLAYERS

A BUNCH OF AMATEURS

by Ian Hyslop and Nick Newman

17th May 2023

This play revolves around a struggling am dram group who are trying to save their Barn Theatre in Stratford. They bring in a guest star, a faded Hollywood actor, Jefferson Steele to play the lead in their production of King Lear, to bolster publicity and audience numbers. However, this Stratford was not the birthplace of the Bard, but a sleepy Suffolk village. Dorothy (Jo Burns) was well cast as the director plus a Lear cast member She was long-suffering and brimming with confidence trying to contain Jefferson. She was an excellent foil for him and the chemistry between them was good.

Nigel Dewbury (Nick Smith) was played confidently in his peevish approach to Jefferson as he felt that he should have had the part of Lear. This culminated in him passing the story to the national press regarding Jefferson's perceived dalliances with Lauren, wife of the sponsor. Although, as usual, he had the wrong end of the stick. Steel's 'affair'. This supposedly happened at the B&B run



by cast member Mary Plunkett, (Louise Taney) who was infatuated with Jefferson yet transitioned delightfully from fixation to anger at his infidelity. The handyman and fellow cast member Dennis Dobbins (Ianto Wain) had an earthy simplicity and was expertly played, becoming Jefferson's minder. Full marks to him, for his performance, having had Covid all week. He also recovered well from a missing prop, like the trooper he is.

Gareth Hammond as Jefferson really looked the part and maintained his American accent convincingly throughout as he portrayed the clueless and demanding fading Hollywood star. He kept up the arrogance brilliantly, of the Hollywood aura, throughout. His drunken scene was beautifully executed. The whole cast gelled well together.

The physio scene with Lauren (Claire Crowther) was excellent and she made a marvellous job of the part.

Jessica, Jefferson's daughter was played well by youthful newcomer Seren



Lemaire who also achieved an American accent. The use of the auditorium was good with effective use of flats and curtains. The appearance of the invalid motorised scooter through the auditorium was a masterpiece.

Although there were very many scenes and sub-scenes, which was a bit distracting, the crew managed the changes very well. The unaccompanied solo singing of folk songs between scenes was not easy, but was carried off well by those cast members who were cajoled into performing.

The lighting and effects were good and appropriate.

The play was greatly enjoyed by a full first night audience. Congratulations to joint directors, Joe O'Connor and Pip Burns.

Nigel James

DORCHESTER A.D.S. One Man, Two Guvnors

by Richard Bean

May 2023

The Play One Man, Two Guvnors is well known from the National Theatre production starring James Corden. I knew of the play but had never seen it, but was told by a friend who had, that it would be tricky to get it right! As far as I am concerned you did it DADS!!

The play is a farce where the main character Francis has to serve two bosses without either getting wind of the other. Needless to say, problems arise!

Dorchester Village Hall is a beautiful village hall with a small auditorium with a stage to one end of the room. There was little distance between the actors and the audience which, I am sure, could prove quite daunting but actually worked well with this script.

Russell Bailey was a tour de force as Francis, clearly at home with interacting with an audience. It was a shame his first entrance was concealed behind other cast members in front of the door. Russell was a real class act, funny and engaging and an actor totally inhabiting his character. This is not to take anything away from the rest of the cast who supported him magnificently.

The physical theatre involved was terrific – well rehearsed and very effectively executed. The script is very funny and got a lot of laughs from a full house. It was delivered well by a committed and hardworking team clearly comfortable working with each other. Funny script poorly delivered can fall flat but this certainly didn't.

There were many highlights. I loved Ryan Fannin, who when playing the aged Alfie, had his pacemaker turned up and moved like lightning. That was a real gem. A call out too, to Christine Jones, who I particularly enjoyed as Pauline – your comic timing was great.

Costuming was good – very evocative of the sixties setting. I thought the use of very obvious nylon wigs, which at first looked naff, but then as more appeared on other heads, seem to run neatly through the play. This was a very clever and

comically absurd device. If it wasn't done deliberately, don't tell anyone!

The set was well thought out and scene changes were effectively covered by a trio of musicians who treated us to a variety of musical hits from across the decades.

I really loved you all and had a fun evening. Well done to director Ed Metcalfe for not only considering this production but for, like Daisy, pulling it off!!

Great fun!

Clare Winterbottom



Banbury Cross Players Cinderella

We have a read through of Cinderella on 29 June. Auditions follow on 3 and 6 July. All at The Mill Arts Centre, 7.30pm.

Anyone welcome. You don't have to be a member to audition. More details will be on our website <https://banburycrossplayers.org.uk> & social media in due course and I'll add to ODN site.

Performance dates are 23rd - 25th Nov at the Mill Arts Centre, Banbury.

Oxford Theatre Guild

Auditions: Oxford Theatre Guild is holding open auditions in June for 2 shows in the Autumn:-

Constellations by Nick Payne in the Old Fire Station (24th - 29th October)

Macbeth in the Wesley Memorial Church (27th November - 2nd December)

For information on audition dates and how to register, see our website:

www.oxfordtheatreguild.com

Direct a show at the Oxford Playhouse:

Oxford Theatre Guild is looking for an experienced director to direct its annual show at the Playhouse in spring 2024. For information on how to submit your pitch, visit our website: www.oxfordtheatreguild.com

Deadline for submissions: 9th July 2023.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

BICESTER CHORAL & OPERATIC SOCIETY

The Addams Family

Based on the popular 1960s TV show we all loved.

This show won numerous awards on Broadway when it opened in 2010 - don't miss out!



When: Thurs 1st to Sat 3rd June at 7.30pm

Where: Cooper School, Churchill Rd, Bicester OX26 4RS

Tickets: £15/£7 online from www.bcoswesing.org.uk

See facebook.com/BicesterChoral

WYCHWOOD PLAYERS

'The Canary Cage' by Diana Raffle, and

'Women Only' by David Tristram

'The Canary Cage' - Three women are locked in a cellar. One of them is psychotic. Two are in danger. Only one survives. This play has the power to send shivers down the spines of the audience and keep them guessing until the end.

 Wychwood Players 



This is followed by supper and then :

www.wychwoodplayers.com

'Women Only' (World Premiere)- After a stressful year for both of them, divorcee Laura decides to take her recently widowed mother Ruth on a much needed holiday. A few gin and tonics later, Laura's whole world is turned upside down. But as the extraordinary revelations start to fly, will there be an unexpected twist?

This brand new comedy from the pen of popular playwright David Tristram is an absolute delight.

When: 1st, 2nd and 3rd June at 7.30pm

Where: New Beaconsfield Hall, Shipton under Wychwood near Burford, Oxon. OX7 6BQ.

Tickets: Includes supper in the interval.

Website: www.wychwoodplayers.com

ODN Festival of One Act Plays

Tue 6th to Sat 10th June

Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon

2 one act plays per evening Tuesday to Friday. Three plays from the week are called back for Saturday Gala night.



This is a friendly festival and our main aim is to bring people together, both in a celebration of theatre and as a learning experience.

The adjudicator this year is Nancy Heath a GODA member. After each play (Mon-Fri), the adjudicator will give a short review and a workshop with the cast.

See Page 2 for full details

OXOPS

On The Steps Of The Palace
A concert celebrating all things royal.



"Once upon a time, there was a palace. And in that palace lived a king, a queen, a princess, and a prince. And also a cook, a ladies maid, a stable boy, and three very strong knights..."

Join Oxford's premier musical theatre group as we come together for a concert to celebrate all things royal! Featuring songs from Hamilton to Camelot, Anastasia to Gondoliers, and Shrek to Six, this specially designed production explores and celebrates royalty in all its many forms—including some you might not expect.

Nestled between King Charles' coronation and official birthday, OXOPS' fairy godmothers will whisk you away for a magical night of music and storytelling—so whether you're a dancing queen or a king of New York, just sit back and enjoy the ball!

When: Sat 10th & Sun 11th June at 7.30pm
+ matinee at 2.30pm on Sun 11th

Where: The Old Fire Station, 40 George St, Oxford OX1 2AQ

Tickets: oldfirestation.org.uk/whats-on/on-the-steps-of-the-palace

WANTAGE SINGS

The 90's A Concert.

Wantage Sings are back with another fabulous collection of songs - this time we'll be transporting you back to the 1990s.



We are performing the following dates:-

16th June 2023 Stanford in the Vale Village Hall

17th June 2023 Old Mill Hall, Grove

23rd June 2023 Steventon Village Hall

24th June 2023 Old Mill Hall, Grove

Doors & Bar opens at 7pm, show starts 7.30pm.

Tickets: £10, Concession £8 from:-

Website: www.WantageSings.co.uk

trying to keep their theatre alive and the developers from the door. In desperation they come up with a publicity plan to gain sponsorships and save their theatre.

Enter stage left Jefferson Steel striding in to play Lear in Stratford. Imagine his surprise as it slowly dawns on him the reality that he is not in Stratford upon Avon!! Hilarity ensues as cultures collide, politely on one side of the equation, and he faces the reality of his vanity and insecurity.

This culturally and very human observant comedy drama comes from the pens of two of the UK's greatest satirical writers in a must see production this summer produced by The Sinodun Players

When: Tuesday 11 to Friday 14 July at 7.30pm
+ Saturday 15th & Sunday 16th July at 2.30pm

Where: The Corn Exchange Theatre, Market Place, Wallingford, OX10 0EG.

Tickets: £12 Wed-Sun, Tue *Special offer* £9
Online at cornexchange.org.uk

Wallingford One-Act Drama Festival



The Corn Exchange Wallingford will host their One-Act Drama Festival between

Tue June 20 & Friday June 23

This year's Festival will be adjudicated by **Cherry Stephenson**. (GoDA)

More information can be found at www.cornexchange.org.uk/drama-festival or if you have any additional questions, email:-

dramafestival@cornexchange.org.uk

See Page 4 for list of plays during the week.

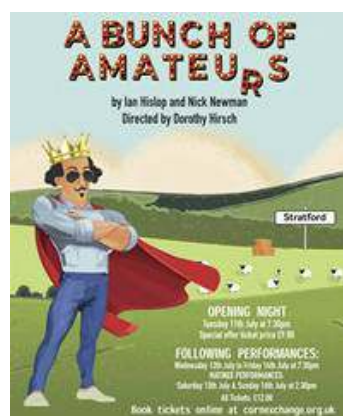
THE SINODUN PLAYERS

A Bunch of Amateurs

by Ian Hislop and
Nick Newman

When a Hollywood action movie superstar comes to your village theatre to take the lead role in a production of King Lear, Hollywood Happens. This cannot be a good thing! Or can it?

The Stratford Players, from a small, but charming village in Suffolk are frantically fundraising

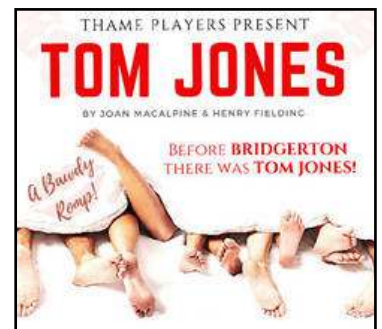


THAME PLAYERS

Tom Jones

by Joan
MacAlpine

Based on the
novels of Henry
Fielding.



Before Bridgerton, there was Tom Jones, a rich, ripe, rowdy, bawdy romp—a comedy set in the mid-eighteenth century. 'The story of a man who was young, foolish, and not so much a sinner as a man much beset by women.' And the trouble it causes could cost him his life!

Tom Jones has been a movie, a musical, several TV series, and a much-performed play. Based on the 18th-century novels of Henry Fielding and adapted for the stage by Joan MacAlpine, Tom Jones is a story of honesty versus lies, love versus lust, virtue versus treacherous hypocrisy, and the class and manners of the era. It is a story about human nature, and it's a lot of fun.

When: Tuesday 11 to Saturday 15 July at 19:45

First night is Gala Night, with free programme & interval drink

Where: The Players Theatre, Nelson Street, Thame, OX9 2DP

Tickets: £8 to £12 from www.thameplayers.co.uk or

The Information Centre, Thame Town Hall, High Street, Thame OX9 3DP

Tel: 01844 212833 (weekdays)

BANBURY CROSS PLAYERS

Things I Know to be True

by Andrew Bovell

Things I Know to be True is a poignant, well-written family drama with powerful characters on a journey with an unexpected conclusion. The writing is beautiful and poetic.



The story of a marriage and a family is told through the eyes of four grown siblings who are struggling to define themselves beyond their parents' love and expectations. The parents think they have a strong family. The children are only doing what the parents want. All want to escape.

Things I Know to be True is a collaborative piece with all characters on-stage throughout and the picture of the family is drawn through movement and mime.

Age Recommendation – 14+

When: 12th to 15th July at 7:30pm

Where: The Mill Arts Centre, Spiceball Park Rd, Banbury, OX16 5QE

Tickets: via www.themillartscentre.co.uk

Website: www.banburycrossplayers.org.uk

LAUNTON VILLAGE PLAYERS

"Come Rain or Shine"

a Summer Variety Show

LVP proudly present their 2023 summer variety show "Come Rain or Shine" – a family friendly show, featuring popular songs (from West End musicals to modern pop songs), dancing, sketches and comedy skits, celebrating everything about the Great British Weather! Suitable for all ages.



This is an open-air show, held at Hare Leys Farm, just over a mile outside of Launton. Parking and toilet facilities are available, and the garden is accessible for those with mobility restrictions. Bring a chair or picnic blanket and come and enjoy an afternoon's entertainment in

ODN website: www.OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org

a beautiful garden, and help use raise money for two very important charities!

Refreshments can be pre-ordered or purchased on the day and contactless payments are available. All profits will be donated to UNICEF and the Bicester Food Bank.

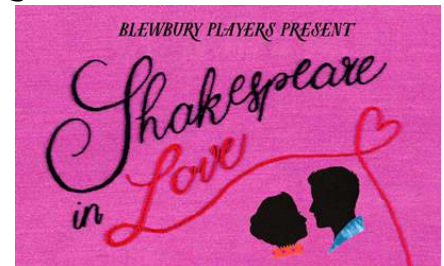
When: Sat 15th & Sun 16th July at 2.30pm

Where: Mayflower Garden Theatre at Hare Leys Farm, OX26 5AB

Tickets: Adults £10 and Children £5 for from www.ticketsource.co.uk/lvp or by calling 07864 715708.

BLEWBURY PLAYERS, Shakespeare In Love.

Based on the Academy Award-winning movie and adapted for the stage by Lee Hall (Billy Elliot, The Pitmen Painters), this hilarious, romantic play finds William Shakespeare struggling to write Romeo and Juliet.



For those who love Shakespeare, this play is for you. For those who hate Shakespeare, this play is for you too, written in English you can understand with lots of jokes. Directed by Steve White, *Shakespeare in Love* will bring Elizabethan London and its theatre back to life in Orchard Dene, with love, death, music, dance, cross-dressing... and a dog.

When: 19 July to 22 July 2023 at 8:00pm

Where: Orchard Dene Garden Theatre

Tickets: Box-Office opens 1st June online from www.blewburyplayers.co.uk

or Email: blewburyplayers@gmail.com

BCOS (BICESTER CHORAL & OPERATIC SOCIETY)

Twist & Shout

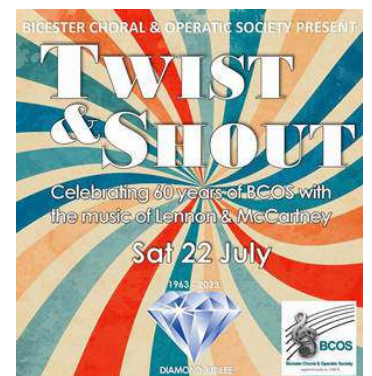
A concert

Taking us into the summer, come along and enjoy the music of Lennon & McCartney as we celebrate 60 years of BCOS

When: Jul 22 2023

Where: St Edburg's Church, Bicester

Tickets: www.bcoswesing.org.uk



AMEGOS THEATRE

Young Frankenstein

The musical by Mel Brooks

The monster musical comedy from the creators of *The Producers*

Frederick Frankenstein, grandson of the infamous Victor Frankenstein, inherits his family's estate in Transylvania.



With the help of a hunchbacked sidekick, Igor, and a leggy lab assistant, Inga, Frederick finds himself in the mad scientist shoes of his ancestors.

"It's alive!" he exclaims as he brings to life a creature to rival his grandfather's. Eventually, of course, the monster escapes and hilarity continuously abounds.

Young Frankenstein has all of the panache of the screen sensation with an extra theatrical flair.

"If you want a bawdy, uproarious belly laugh that's done out of pure love for the genres that it parodies, this is a show that delivers in spades." - *The Radio Times*.

Suitable for all ages,
(under 14s must be accompanied by an adult).

When: Wantage 3rd - 5th August at 7.30pm
+ Matinee Sat at 2.30pm

Where: King Alfred's Academy Theatre,
Wantage, OX12 9BY

Tickets: via www.amegostheatre.com

ABINGDON OPERATIC SOCIETY

'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang'

AOS will be taking to the skies in the world's most beloved flying car. That's right, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang is coming to Abingdon.

Based on the 1968 film, starring Dick Van Dyke, Sally Ann Howes and Lionel Jeffries, which was

itself based on the original book by Ian Fleming, the musical version made it's debut at the London Palladium in 2002, before moving on to Broadway in 2005. Since then, it has also been a popular touring show, with multiple productions playing to packed audiences in major cities in the UK & US.

All of the well-known songs from the film are in the show, including 'Toot Sweets', 'Me Ol' Bamboo', 'Truly Scrumptious', 'Chu-Chi Face', and of course, 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang'.

Everyone at AOS is excited that we've managed to be one of the few amateur societies in the country chosen to produce this show, and we can't wait to start work in 2023.

When: Tue 24th to Sat 28th October at 7.30pm
(plus a 2.30pm Saturday matinee)

Where: The Amey Theatre, Abingdon School,
OX14 1DE.

Tickets: from £11.50 to £19.50
see www.abingdonoperatic.co.uk



Your ODN Committee

Officers

Chair	Karen Carey	(Didcot Phoenix Drama Group)
Secretary	Becki Brewis	(Wootton Players)
Newsletter/Website	Mike Davies	(Drayton Players & Jigsaw Stage Productions)
Treasurer	Post unfilled – we are desperately in need of a volunteer	
Membership Secretary	Jess Ebberson	(Kennington Amateur Dramatic Society)

General members

Mike Lacey	(Kingston Bagpuize)
Sue Hadley	(Drayton Players & Buttercross Productions)
Mandyrae Jessey	(BODS of Wychwood)

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