

# Oxfordshire Drama Network



## Newsletter

JUNE 2024

### EDITOR'S COMMENTS

I'd like to welcome our new treasurer Richard Winslet who took over the role at the AGM in April. He's arranging on-line banking and getting things more up-to-date!



There's a lot going on in the next few weeks, two Drama Festivals in particular. Please try to see some of the plays to support our member groups. Real enthusiasts can watch 4 nights at a reduced price, AND if you buy tickets for the 4 nights, you get to vote for the "Punter's Choice Award" (at both the Abingdon and Wallingford Festivals).

There are also quite a few plays and musicals in June & July, to watch before the summer break.

Next issue is in August, so don't forget to get your Autumn show details, reviews and articles to me before 20th of July.

*Mike Davies.*

### CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



June is one of my favourite months of the year for drama with festivals and summer productions in the offing from our member groups and some even outdoor and garden productions – I really hope they all go well and the English weather plays ball and not have you all running for cover!

Congratulations to Ann Dayton and her Henley Festival Committee for another brilliant Henley Festival in the lovely Kenton Theatre. I really enjoyed the thoughts and comments of their adjudicator, Tristan Marshall, on the participating plays and was really moved by his speech at the end when he implored groups to support festivals as he still wants to be 'doing this job next year'. With many festivals around the country folding, we are really lucky to have 3 fantastic festivals in this area – Henley, Wallingford and of course our own – ODN. But, like the village pub, if you don't support them, you will lose them. We have ODN at the Unicorn Theatre the first week of June and the Corn Exchange Festival, Wallingford, the week after – even if your group isn't performing, please do consider attending at least one performance and supporting them.

I'm also very excited by the upcoming National Drama Festival in Coventry in July – last year we had 2 ODN member groups competing .....can we do the same this year??

Break a leg Karen Carey (Chair)

### WHAT'S ON DIARY (details inside)

#### JUNE

- 1-8 Didcot Phoenix Drama Group **I Hear You**  
4-8 **ODN Drama Festival Abingdon**  
12-15 **Wallingford One-Act Play Festival**  
20-22 Wychwood Players **Two plays**

#### JULY

- 9-13 OxOps (Oxford) **Funny Girl**  
9-13 Thame Players **The Ladykillers**  
11-13 Banbury Cross Players **Home, I'm Darling**  
12-13 St Peter's Players **Supper Show (ALICE)**  
13 Kingston Bagpuize D.G.  
**Dressed To Kill! A Murder Mystery**  
17-20 Blewbury Players  
**The Caucasian Chalk Circle**  
20-21 Luntun Village Player **It's Showtime!**

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# Oxfordshire Drama Network One Act Play Festival



Tue 4<sup>th</sup> to Sat 8<sup>th</sup> June from 7.30pm

At the Unicorn Theatre, Checker Walk,  
Abingdon OX14 3HZ

**Tuesday-Friday** 2 or 3 one act plays per evening, the time-table of plays is shown below, **Saturday Gala night** - 3 plays from the week are called back, This is a friendly festival and our main aim is to bring people together in celebration of theatre and as a learning experience.

Tickets are now available from :-

[www.ticketsource.co.uk](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk)

Also: SOON (watch this space) from 'The Bookstore' in Abingdon precinct, or email [info@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org](mailto:info@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org)

Tickets are:

**Tue-Fri** £10 (£8 Concessions) per night.

Punters Season ticket:

£35 (£28 Conc) for Tuesday to Friday tickets.

**Saturday** 3 plays called back - £12 (£10 Conc)

The adjudicator this year is Martin Parr (Associate member of GODA).. After each play (Tue-Fri), the Adjudicator will give a short review and a workshop with the cast.

Saturday Gala night will be 3 plays chosen from the week followed by awards, and a Gala Party in the Long Gallery.

A map of how to find the Unicorn Theatre can be found here ->

[abingdonabbeybuildings.co.uk/abbey-buildings/visiting-the-abbey-buildings](http://abingdonabbeybuildings.co.uk/abbey-buildings/visiting-the-abbey-buildings)

We regret that there is no wheel-chair access to the seating area of the Unicorn Theatre as it is a Listed Building.

## TIME-TABLE of PLAYS for Tue-Fri

### Tuesday 4th June

Oxford Theatre Guild

**Wrong Seat** by Adam Wakely

BODs of Wychwood

**Husbands Supplied** by Falkland L. Cary

### Wednesday 5th June

Kingston Bagpuize DG

**Housebound** by Simon Maudsley

Banbury Cross Players

**The Proposal** by Anton Chekhov

### Thursday 6th June

Didcot Phoenix **Metamorphosis**  
(...or Letting nature take its course)

by Gary Bird

Sinodun Players **And Go To Innisfree**

by Jean Lenox Toddie

### Friday 7th June

Kingston Bagpuize DG

**Reminiscing** - by Charles Dennison

HAODS (Henley)

**Woyzeck** by Georg Buchner

Adapted by Piers Burnell

Drayton Players

**Last Tango in Little Grimley**

by David Tristram

### Saturday 8th June -

**Gala night**

3 shows from the above recalled by the adjudicator and presentation of awards.

# How to Overcome Stage Fright

By Grey Pratt, Pioneer Drama Service

It's almost time for your big entrance. Your palms are sweaty, your knees are trembling, and your mouth is dry. You're hoping beyond hope that your performance is over soon. We all know this feeling. Almost everyone has stage fright to a certain degree — that shock of fear that triggers the production of adrenaline, which ensures that you get those feelings of stress and excitement. A little bit of this tension is good because it helps you stay focused and energized. But too much can take away from the fun in your performance.

Even world-renowned, award-winning performers regularly experience stage fright. Helen Mirren once confessed, "I still suffer terribly from stage fright. I get sick with fear. Not every night, but at the beginning and on occasion — not necessarily when I'm expecting it. You just have to cope with it — take it on the chin and work through it, trying to use the adrenalin to perform."



As a director, you'll find it beneficial to address stage fright weeks before the actual performance. Share these tips with your actors so in the days and weeks before opening night, they can already be working to soothe their nerves and alleviate their tensions.

Know that you don't have to be perfect. Allow yourself to make mistakes. A slip of the tongue, a wrong word, forgetting your lines — it's okay... to a point! So don't beat yourself up over every little flub. Instead, practice beforehand how to recover when something goes wrong. That way, you know what you're going to do onstage, and you can know how to proceed if you make a mistake. In addition, keep in mind that the people in the audience understand your nerves — they've all experienced it, too. So if they laugh, remember that they're laughing with you, not at you.

Acknowledge that stage fright is normal and use that energy to fuel your performance. Everyone experiences stage fright, even those who have taken the stage hundreds of times. Let it reassure you that you're not alone, and that it is something you can overcome. In the weeks before your performance, find inspirational quotes from actors or singers you admire and read them over and over again as your own positive affirmations.

Turn negative talking into positive thinking. The longer you stay engulfed in negative territory the more it will feel like home. We are all experts at beating ourselves up through negative talk.

Throughout rehearsals, use positive thinking and affirmations instead. Create a positive groove you can stay in for the actual performances. During rehearsals, take every negative statement you say about yourself and add "yet" to the end of it. "I don't know my lines... yet." "I'm not a good dancer... yet." "I can't do this... yet."

Find time for calming activities in the days before your performance. Play sports or exercise, listen to music you love, read a book, go for a walk, do yoga, play with your dog... the possibilities are endless.

You are your character. Reframe your thinking and imagine that it's your character, not you, going onstage. It is your character who might make a mistake, not you. So don't think about yourself. How would your character react if they tripped while entering, dropped a prop, or hiccupped in the middle of saying something?

You are a part of a whole. You have worked with your cast for countless hours of rehearsals by now. They're there to help you if something goes differently than expected.

Shake it out. Sometimes the best way to get the nerves out is to literally shake them out! Wiggle your arms, shake your hands, jump up and down. Use your jitters as energy to move throughout your space and release muscle tension.



Take deep breaths. Deep breaths are one of the most soothing things you can do when you feel overwhelmed. Inhale through the nose and out through the mouth, making sure that the breath goes deep into your diaphragm and not into your shoulders. Stand up straight, open up your chest. This will make you look and feel more confident. Take 30 seconds. Just. Breathe.

Trust the moment. Know that you've already done most of the work. You've practiced and memorized lines. You've learned lyrics, songs, and dances. You've worked hard and done your best. Now, let it go. Enjoy the fruits of your labor and trust yourself in the moment!

You know that instance when you're standing onstage and you have that feeling of tension? When it comes down to it, it's a logical feeling and actually very good! Embrace it! Because of that tension, your performance can peak! Everyone has that feeling, even if they've been there a thousand times before. So don't worry about it. Use the energy to feel alive... you are a performer.

From [www.pioneerdrama.com](http://www.pioneerdrama.com)

# WINTER FESTIVAL AWARDS 23/24

The following Awards were presented at the ODN AGM in Abingdon on 19<sup>th</sup> April.

**Best Front of House** **Banbury Cross Players**  
Also Nominated: BODs, Launton, Hooky Players

**Best Programme**  
**Launton Village Players**

Also Nominated: Sinodun Players, BODs, Sinodun



**Technical Award** **Abingdon DC (Visual FX)**  
Also Nominated: Adderbury, Kennington, Hooky



**Best Costume/Hair/Make-up**  
**BODs (Wychwood)**

Also Nominated: Launton, Dorchester, Sinodun

**Choreography** **Banbury Cross Players**  
Also Nominated: Kennington, Launton, Sinodun

**Music Award** **Sinodun Players**  
Also Nominated: Kennington, Launton, St Peters

**Best Chorus** **St Peters Players**  
Also Nominated: Kennington, Launton, Sinodun

**Best Cameo** **Will Leadbetter (Sinodun 'Old Man of the Sea')**

Also Nominated:  
Mark Padbury (KBDG 'Fairy Godfather'),  
Ruth Hawkins (ADC 'Mrs Darling'),  
Ann Winslet (DADs 'Mystic Sharon'),  
Simon Turner (Launton 'Sir Bravado'),  
Toto (Adderbury 'Toto')

**Rising Star (Youth Award)**  
**Malsey Onslow-Major (Kennington 'Young Rose')**

Also Nominated: Huw Osbourne (Adderbury - several cameo roles)



**Best Baddie** **Karen Smith (Hooky 'Morgana')**

Also Nominated:  
Natasha Watts (KADs 'bad Witch Hazel'),  
Nicky Roberts (Launton 'Mother Goose'),  
Carol-Anne Tilley (DADs 'Ringmaster Heinkel').

**Best Comedy Performance**

**Gary Leonardi (Adderbury 'Tin Man')**

Also Nominated:  
Fiona Huntingford-Ledger (Sinodun),

Nick Lester (BCP 'baron Hardup'),  
Duncan Blagrove (ADC 'Smee, Peter Pan'),

Hayley Poole (DADs 'Silly Billy').



**Best Dame**  
**James Dixon (BODs)**

Also Nominated:  
Matt Thornton (Hooky Players),  
Justin Clinch (BCP),  
Alice Hope (DADs).



**Magic Moment: 'True Colours' musical number, (Kennington)**

Also Nominated:  
Transformation - Kingston Bagpuize DG

Butterfly Chorus - Launton Village Players

Giant bird flying over audience – Sinodun  
Air-Guitar-Playing Horse - Hooky Players.



**Best overall show:**



1st. Launton Village Players – Rapunzel  
2nd. Kingston Bagpuize DG – Cinderella  
3rd. St Peters Players – Goldilocks & the 3 Bears

# WINTER FESTIVAL REVIEWS

## Kingston Bagpuize D.G. **Cinderella** by Tom Whalley November 2023

This was a superb, faultless pantomime. It had a different opening, with a Fairy Godfather, expertly played by Mark Padbury, who guided Cinderella through the trials and tribulations of her dysfunctional family.

The only sane one was Cinderella's put-upon father, Baron Hardup who was played diminutively by Ian Stange, although we did see Cinderella's mother (Mary Elizabeth Shewry), briefly, along with a young Cinderella (Isla Eastham).

The new Baroness Hardup, Vindicta, was viciously played by Sarah Cullen who looked great in her green outfits and bright red hair. Cinderella was delightfully played by Martha Clifton, who had a good rapport with Buttons (Tasha Padbury) whose energy was boundless and connection with the audience was brilliant.

The Ugly Sisters (Claire Wheeler & Dan Sears) were a sight to behold, and were superbly played over-the-top, with excellent audience interaction, particularly with the poor chap subjected to their banter, which was carried on throughout the production. Prince Charming (Fiona Eaton) was appropriately aloof and had an effective energetic partnership with Dandini (Emily Eastham). The principals were ably supported by a lively chorus whose singing and dancing were very effective, with an accomplished pianist (Alan Pianosmith).

The effects, including the Winter Wonderland, were very well handled and, for a small stage the scene changes were slick and efficient. The transformation of the pumpkin into the coach and Cinderella's dress were brilliantly carried out, whilst blinding the audience with a spotlight. Special mention must be made for the enormous inflatable Unicorn, (Deb Didcock) who pulled the coach. The ghost scene and the 12 Days of Christmas were accomplishedly performed. With many costume changes this made a thoroughly enjoyable experience for young and old.

Congratulations to all.

Nigel James

## St Peter's Players **Goldilocks & the 3 Bears**

2nd December 2023

This pantomime had an original twist on the traditional story. Set in a failing Carnival circus, Goldilocks (Eve Winterbottom) is being pursued by her evil guardian, Gasper Grey (Pete Drury) who attracted many 'boos' and his hapless henchmen, Swindle (Mary Drennan) and Filch (Tony Bywaters). Goldilocks has sought sanctuary in the carnival and in a desperate attempt to get her back Gasper threatens to close down the carnival.

The owner, Sophie Sawdust, skilfully played by Andrew Churchill Stone, with many costume changes, tries to get a plan to foil Gasper. Tommy, the Carnival Magician (Sam Haden), had a good singing voice and was good playing opposite Goldilocks, who gave confidence to whoever she was performing against. Madam Zarina the clairvoyant (Annette Jaggard) kept popping up to guide us through the upcoming story. Jocko (Nick Faddian) the Carnival Barker was fond of Gloria, the Magician's assistant (Catherine McCosker) and performed a good duet together.

The large chorus, including a contingent of youngsters, performed well. Although indistinct at first, they soon gained their confidence. The young chorus were very good.

The Statue scene in the Old Manor was superb, convincing and well-acted.

The Three Bears, who were brought in as a favour to save the failing carnival were delightfully played by, Aaron Percival, Claire Winterbottom, Zara Churchill Stone, with the Gorilla(?) played by Ben Churchill Stone. I am still trying to work out the significance of the Gorilla. The plot to capture the 3 Bears was successfully foiled and the Carnival saved.

The panto was very well constructed and produced, although it lacked pace a little at times.

The sets were ingenious and well thought out with very slick changes.

There were some very good performances and the chorus supported the principals very well, the live band was very good, as were the sound effects. There were just too many songs. Any excuse and here comes another song, which just made the performance too long.

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

Nigel James

# Wychwood BODS

## A Lad in Boots

by Tony Mellerick

January 2024

This pantomime had a very good opening, with a very large cast. The stage was very well presented, but the moves between scenes were very slow leaving the audience sitting in the dark staring at blank curtains. There could have been more fillers to keep the audience occupied. The costumes were excellent, given that there was a very large cast. The show was very well directed and the dancing was limited, due to the size of the cast and the size of the stage. The stage and auditorium were well used and the overall production was as well as could be expected with a disjointed story that lost its way. The script had not been thought through. There were several spurious characters which appeared and no-one was sure why they were there. (workmen and lady in the pink Stetson)

Having said that there were some good characterisations. The dame (James Dixon) was impressive throughout. The highlight was the appearance of the lugubrious Genie (Ian O'Hara), who kept being rejected, but was required in the end. The Uncle (Chris Bull) was well portrayed and particularly evil. The cat (Amy Hopkins) was very good and Al (Yasmine Alani) was very solid throughout. Tracy was suitably over-played by Scarlett Wilson, with good singing and dancing. Yin-Yan (Kirsty Plant) and Sin-San (Evie Arnold) were good foils to Tracy. The Empress's ensemble was very effective. The Emissary was very confident and his song was very well delivered. Lord Krunk (George Harper) was scary and well played.

The washing machine was very effective. We did not quite see the point of the guards, although their actions were performed well.

The last song started off a bit weak but got better. This demonstrated how difficult it is to perform modern songs, with no distinct tune.

The sound and recorded music was very good.

Overall, a very enjoyable production, if somewhat confusing.

Congratulations to all.

Nigel James

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## Sinodun Players

# The Adventures of Sinbad

January 2024

The opening was a great start with excellent singing and dancing. All of the chorus and dancers were well engaged with the action. The costumes were vibrant and varied which set the tone of the whole performance.

The royal family were stately in their performance, with the thigh-slapping prince Kassim (Bojenna Cox)

leading the pack. They were ably supported by the servants, Alibi and Aliway (Rebecca Cleverly & the effervescent Fiona Huntingford-Ledger) who maintained the comedy to a very high standard throughout. They had great audience inter-action and appealed to all ages, not least of which was the singing with the juniors being invited onto stage to join in. The younger element certainly enjoyed the lavatorial innuendos of the camel. It was unusual to see an elephant in a pantomime, but she, Ballerina, certainly stole the show and was brilliantly operated by Gail Slinger. The dame, Fatima, was well played by Adam Brimly, but could have been a little more exuberant to establish his character. Alex Watts was one of the 'baddies', who was suitably evil in his portrayal of Bulbus Nosa, who captures Princess Jade (Georgia Willans), closely followed by Sinbad (Zoe Nielsen). Sinbad encounters the other 'baddie' the Old man of the Sea, who was excellently played by Will Lidbetter, who sang well, despite his evil appearance. Sinbad is saved thanks for the assistance of the Peri-of-the-ring skilfully played, in complete confusion by Jean Simmons.

The fight scene was brilliantly choreographed, which reflected the quality of the dance throughout. The band were amazing, if not a little loud at times. This, however, did not detract from the quality of the singing

Characterisation was well throughout, against the good Fairy Barbara Wood, who was equally well cast. Introducing the main characters was amusing with the Dame, delightfully played by Tom Mackriel with a good singing voice and good audience connection. She was flanked by her two sons, Jack, the sensible one played thigh-slappingly well by Laura Gow and Simon, the dim one played by the

The chorus sang and danced well and were occupied and engaged even when they were not performing. There was a good choice of songs throughout.

The scenes were good with slick changes, from the Market Place to the desert. The corny jokes were good and well delivered.

An excellent pantomime and congratulations are due to all involved.

Nigel James

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## Adderbury Theatre Workshop

# The Wizard of Oz

25th January 2024

This tiny stage contained a very large cast, which made movement very difficult. The opening scene introduced us to the characters on the farm. Em (Emma Baldry) and Henry (Andrew Green) were caring guardians of Dorothy (Rose Belcher), who had a lovely singing voice and performed her songs beautifully. Melanie Coxstole the show both as the wicked Edna Gultch and Witch of the West, where her evil side really shone through. She was very Dame Edna-esque. Barry Humphries would have been very proud. Her companion, the Witch of the South (Alison Heath) was a good foil for her. Toto the

dog (Diane Grant) was well played with mischievous 'doggyness.' The Scarecrow (Paul Cox) delivered his song very skilfully. The Tin man (Gary Leonardi) was cleverly portrayed, coming out of his rusty state. There were all sorts of spurious characters which appeared to add to the absolute bonkersness of the production. There were the 'Google Maps Man', two Copyright Officials, the Mortician, Said the Spiv and the Magnificent Seven Biscuit Bandits. We are still trying to work out what they had to do with the plot, but all added to the fun of the production.

There were many doublings and a huge chorus, which made the spectacle of the show. All of the cast played their parts well, together with the rising star, Huw Osborne who sang and danced his heart out. The audience song was well received and the ending with the Wizard was great.

For a small stage the sound and effects were good and the projected scenes worked well.

A thoroughly enjoyable production. Congratulations to all.

Nigel James

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## **Launton Village Players**

### **Rapunzel**

**17th February 2024**

This really was a feel-good pantomime. From the moment you entered the doors, there were costumed members of the cast to welcome you happy, smiling and dancing along to the talented band. This was in addition to the parrots which appeared in all sorts of places, much to the delight of the younger audience.

Felix the Phoenix (Daisy Richards) opened the show and introduced us to the various characters. Mother Gothel (Nicky Roberts) was excellent and frightening as the baddie; evil in her desire for absolute power, getting boo-ed from all angles. She captures Felix and imprisons him outside the Tower for trying to rescue with Rapunzel and banishes other supporters to far-off land where they meet with a band of pirates and an assortment of creatures played by the children's chorus who performed some spectacular dance routines as the birds, butterflies and flamingos, all of which were very effective.

Dame Penny Perm (Mark Huson) was spritely, with many costume changes. The representation of the various ages of Rapunzel was well played, resulting in the adult Rapunzel (Natasha Patrick) who was well played and engaging. Bobby, the hero of the story was a little quiet in his speaking but there was an excellent duet between Bobby and Rapunzel. The planting of 'Bobby's box' was well managed and continued throughout the show. The hapless pair of Waynetta (Nik Sherriff) and Gilbert (Marcus Lamb) were suitably 'clueless' as the guards and decorators. The Wolf (Kate Gordon) was scary and well played.

The large cast was well supported by an enthusiastic chorus who sang and danced joyously.

The scene, whilst simple, were changed swift and were well organised. The audience song was well received.

The whole show was very well performed and the enormous cast was skilfully marshalled by Director and writer, 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 remarkable show.

Nigel James

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## **Hookey Players**

### **The King Arthur Show**

**Hook Norton War Memorial Hall, 23rd February 2024**

With only a tiny stage, this limited the size of cast, which reduced it down to just the principals, but was, nevertheless a well-rounded production with all the elements of a pantomime.

The show got off to a good start, warmly welcoming the guests in the audience. The good fairy, Nimsie (Pam Horne) had a strong presence and opened the show well. She was well-matched by the bad fairy, Morgana (Karen Smith) who was terrifyingly evil with a maniacal laugh and splendidly adorned with an imposing black feather standing collar. She worked her magic on poor Nimsie, turning her into a gibbering wreck, until she returned to her old self and defeated Morgana. Queen Guinevere (Matt Thornton) was superbly OTT and very camp. She had good interaction with the audience and many changes of costume, which were worn to good effect. King Arthur (Kevin Hope) was played very well, being haplessly henpecked by the domineering Queen. Gawain (Richard Hart) was suitably wet in his pursuit of Morgana's daughter, Tortolina (Jessica Hackland), who did a superb song unaccompanied, which was not easy. She was played Tortolina very well with a personality change after a spell from a restored Nimsie. Henry, the horse (Hannah Crawley) was very effective, especially playing the electric guitar. The Beast, (Bev Gould) was every bit as frightening as her character's description required and played her scenes impressively. Gowain's unaccompanied song was brilliant, as was the 'Music Man' audience song.

The sound and lighting were excellent, with every sound effect (and there were lots) absolutely on cue. There were some great asides from the audience, which helped the fun of the show.

This was a memorable show with a small cast, given the constraints of the stage, with little or no off-stage space.

A thoroughly enjoyable production. Congratulations to all.

Nigel James

# REVIEW

## **Oxford Theatre Guild** **The Importance of Being Earnest** By Oscar Wilde

### **A Thoroughly Delightful Production**

When *The Importance of Being Earnest* was first staged in 1885, Oscar Wilde's popularity was undeniable. This witty, romantic farce, subtitled 'A Trivial Comedy for Serious People' was instantly a critical success, but the play sadly became not just a high for the author's career, but rather its climax. On opening night, the Marquess of Queensberry -the vengeful father of Wilde's lover Alfred Douglas - planned to disrupt the show with a bouquet of rotten vegetables, but Wilde was tipped off and the Marquess was refused entry. Wilde then retaliated by suing the Marquess for libel, a profoundly miscalculated move which ultimately provided enough evidence of Wilde's homosexuality for him to be tried and convicted on charges of gross indecency. His career would never recover, and *The Importance of Being Earnest* closed after only 86 performances.

Thankfully, despite this, the play was not lost to time and has continued to delight audiences for 14 further decades including most recently with Oxford Theatre Guild's playful and smooth production at The Oxford Playhouse, which ran for 6 performances last week, and moves the action up to the 20th century, specifically the roaring twenties.

The plot concerns two best friends, Algernon 'Algie' Moncrieff (Billy Morton) and Jack Worthing (Alex Lushington), who have each discovered a clever hack for avoiding unpleasant situations - fictional alter egos. Jack has his incorrigible younger brother Earnest (an identity he himself assumes, in order to live a more libertine life in the city), and Algie has his forever-ailing friend 'Bunbury', whom he must rush away to care for. But when the poised Gwendolen Fairfax, Algie's cousin and the object of Jack's affection, comes to visit and declares she loves 'Earnest' due to the wonderful sound of his name, the tangled web Jack has woven becomes harder for him to separate himself from.

Both delightfully and preposterously, Algie finds himself in a similar predicament in the play's second act, becoming involved with Jack's precocious and fizzy ward Cecily, who just turned eighteen, while pretending to be (guess who) Jack's younger brother Earnest. Elsewhere, there's a disapproving parent, an origin story involving a misplaced handbag, and a priest with a crush. All is resolved by the time the curtains close, but there's ample time for

misunderstandings and memorable one-liners before then.

Both delightful and preposterous is a pretty apt description for the tone throughout, and Oxford Theatre Guild excels at capturing the silliness stitched together with shrewd wit. One of Wilde's strengths was satirising the upper classes in a way that felt gleeful rather than embittering to behold. The acting here was excellent across the board. Morton and Lushington brought humorous chemistry and electricity to their banter, which was the central joy of the production. Meanwhile, Rose McAuley teased a droll, measured humour out of every line as Gwendolen Fairfax and Matilda Hadcock brought a luminosity and infectious cheer to Cecily. Triona Adams, who was side-splittingly hilarious in OTG's *The Recruiting Officer* last year, does a lot with a small role here too as Mrs Prism, Cecily's guardian.

If I had to criticise, I'd say I don't know how much the move to the 1920s really improved the play (although the costumes were fabulous). There was an odd teapot-shaped set piece in Act Two that seemed jarringly Alice in Wonderland-esque, and the interval, at the end of the first act (there are three acts total) was so early on in the evening that the second half weighed down by its runtime. But these are minor quibbles. The silliness of the story still inspires smiles and guffaws, and the night was an undeniably enjoyable one. In a way, this is the perfect play for a (talented) am dram company to put on, because the script lives and dies by its delivery. A win for the OTG.

Sophia Holme (Daily Info)

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## **Wychwood Players** **Arsenic & Old Lace'**

by Joseph Kesselring 25th -27th April 2024

A Delightfully Enchanting Comic Drama

Multi tasking seems to be a prerequisite for the Wychwood Players latest production, *Arsenic & Old Lace* by Joseph Kesselring, set in 1940s Brooklyn in the home of the Brewster family.

Director, Simon Johnson, has not only pulled together a highly entertaining whilst cleverly witty and hauntingly scary production, but also designed and built the impressive set with the aid of stage manager, Bob Days and the assistance of stage hand, Alex Johnson together with other crew and cast volunteers.

When not performing as the menacingly insane Dr Einstein, Anthony Gofton worked his usual magic managing sound, providing music in keeping with the period in which the play is set. It is good to see Anthony on stage instead of at the rear of the hall for a change, showcasing his other talents.



Lighting, thanks to the skills of Tony Mellerick, seemed all the more effective since the addition of blackout blinds in the New Beaconsfield Hall, adding to the tension and mood throughout, particularly during the night time scene.



Seasoned actors, Rose Hartley and Hazel Hughes, presented the Brewster sisters magnificently and with convincing aplomb, delightfully enchanting in their sympathies whilst killing off their lodgers. Their gentleness and old fashioned innocence (despite their propensity to murder) contrasted perfectly with the menacing undercurrent of violence provided by the monstrous Jonathan and Dr Einstein, played by Rik Yapp and Anthony Gofton, scarily intrusive as unwanted visitors to the household.

John McCormick played Teddy beautifully, mixing madness with humour as well as with the aid of a rather loud bugle!



The vicar was reverently performed by Wychwood Players regular, versatile actor Phillip Croxson, who also played Mr Witherspoon, Head of the Happydale Sanitarium.

This production sees the Wychwood Players bring a host of new faces to the stage as several new members have been cast and with great success.

Elaine was played by new member, Sarah Gilbey, a feisty young lady, newly engaged to the hero of the plot, Mortimer Brewster, played by Andy Belchambers. Andy goes from strength to strength with the Wychwood Players and brought a fresh energy to the play as the shocked nephew and theatre critic from New York.

Police officers Brophy and Klein were portrayed well by newcomer to the group, Samantha Broadhurst

and Vikki Days, enjoying the natural camaraderie and officialdom one might expect in a small town at this time. New, younger member Sam Nel plays officer O'Hara.

Steve Banyard as potential lodger, Mr Gibbs, provided a pleasing cameo as the one who got away and Ralph Wears added wit and humour as Lieutenant Rooney in the final scene, whilst both also managed publicity for the production.

The whole cast and crew are to be congratulated for a most enjoyable production, bringing to life this fine period play with the usual Wychwood Players professionalism. As a local amateur group, Wychwood Players should be proud of the high standard of productions it continues to present.

by Joanna McKerlie

## Bartholomew Players Pack of Lies by Hugh Whitmore

This highly polished performance from the entire cast was a credit to Bartholomew Players and the directors, Laurence Marks and Debi Lisburn Diacon.

Barbara Jackson (Elaine Leggett) a good suburban housewife and mother took us superbly through a whole range of emotions and was particularly good when portraying a woman under pressure and near



breaking point. Her reaction to Helen in the latter stages was excellent. A shining performance. Her husband, Bob Jackson (Chris Carson) was solid in his reactions to the evolving situation and very good under pressure from Stewart. Julie Jackson (Seren Lemaire) was very confident and very effective playing the 'stropky teenage daughter'.

Helen Kroger (Claire Crowther) was imposing and convincing as the American/Canadian friend. She had a great presence and was able to command the stage throughout all aspects of her relationship with Barbara. Peter Kroger (Gareth Hammond) was very effective, with a good accent and quietly persuasive in his manner.

Stewart (John Casey) was very authoritative, quietly spoken, but with menace. He was convincing in his questioning, with excellent timing. His constant encircling of the room was a little off-putting.

The tension was well maintained the whole time and kept everyone guessing who was involved with the spying. It raised the question of whether there

was a 'Christie 'double-bluff of a crooked police officer and was there any involvement of Julie? The appearance of Thelma (Sara Miller), police surveillance officer dispelled that theory. She was very professional in her portrayal, as was Sally (Pip Burns) her replacement officer.

The soliloquies from each of the cast members were well delivered and were very effective.



The set was ingenious, with everyone well-disciplined to ensure that they followed the correct routes through the rooms, even during blackouts. Sound and lighting were outstanding. The costumes were all appropriate and well thought out, with a different costume effected with just a change of cardigan.

Overall, the play was exceptional and the professionalism of the directors and cast shone through.

Congratulations.

Nigel James

## AUDITIONS

### AMEGOS THEATRE

#### The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

by Mark Haddon and Simon Stephens.

Auditions takeplace at 2pm on 23rd June in Childrey

The play will be performed in Wantage from 30th October to 2nd November



The play opens with Christopher, fifteen years old, standing beside Mrs Shears' dead dog. It has been speared with a garden fork, it is seven minutes after midnight and Christopher is under suspicion. He records each fact in the book he is writing to solve the mystery of who murdered Wellington. Christopher has an extraordinary brain. He is exceptional at maths, while everyday life presents some barriers. He has never ventured alone beyond the end of his road, he detests being touched and he distrusts strangers. When he falls under suspicion for killing his neighbour's dog, it takes him on a journey that upturns his world.

We are looking for cast for this amazing, award-winning play, see the list on:-

<https://www.oxfordshiredramanetwork.org/node/1570>

## DORCHESTER A.D.S.

**DADS** are inviting anyone who would like to join them to an informal read-through of their next play, **Lord Arthur Savile's Crime**. The read-through in the Village Hall on Monday, 24th June at 7.30 pm. is open to anyone interested in performing or helping out behind the scenes.

**Lord Arthur Savile's Crime by Constance Cox** is a comedy based on the short story by Oscar Wilde and is sure to be a lot of fun. Up to ten actors are required with auditions being held on Monday, 1st July at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall. You don't have to be an existing member to be considered.

More information is available from Mark Wilkin, [markwilkin@gmail.com](mailto:markwilkin@gmail.com) or 07500 410710.

Please also contact Mark if you are interested but cannot attend either evening.

## WYCHWOOD PLAYERS

### *It's a Wonderful Life*

George Bailey has spent his whole life serving the people of Bedford Falls. He runs a modest building and loan company, founded by his father. But on Christmas Eve, George's Uncle Billy loses the business's \$8,000 while meaning to pay it into the bank. George realises that he will be held responsible and sent to jail and the company will collapse. He contemplates suicide. But his guardian angel comes to help him!

This is to be our November production, directed by John McCormick. In order that we can hit the ground running, the following dates have been arranged:

Tuesday 2nd July – read through play

Tuesday 9th July – auditions, after which the play will be cast

Tuesday 23rd July – read through for the cast

Thursday 25th July – speed blocking

From 7pm at Stone Barn, Springhill Farm, Upper Milton, Oxon. OX7 6EY.

The cast will then have an opportunity to start learning their lines during August, with rehearsals being on Tuesdays and Thursdays, starting on 2nd September, at Stone Barn.

Times to be advised, but likely to be 7pm.

Production dates are 21-23 November.

The New Beaconsfield Hall, Shipton under Wychwood, OX7 6BQ

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### Didcot Phoenix Drama Group

#### 'I Hear You' by Emma Gardner

'I Hear You' is a comedy drama that takes a humorous look at situations that can happen to anyone, and asks who is listening and who is not listening. It is full of characters who listen and don't listen in different ways.



It's a new play written by local playwright Emma Gardner for Didcot Phoenix Drama Group. Her previous play 'No Prime Minister' won 'Best Original Play' at the 2023 Henley Drama Festival.

Sarah Medley, playing the part of Alice said "Often in life you can feel like you're saying something loud and clear and yet people still aren't listening".

#### Venues and Dates:-

Saturday 1st June at 2pm,  
**Hagbourne Village Hall**  
(53 Main Rd, East Hagbourne, Didcot OX11 9LR)

Wednesday 5th June at 7:30pm,  
Northbourne Centre Community Centre  
(Church St, **Didcot** OX11 8EQ)

Saturday 8th June at 7:30pm,  
**Harwell Village Hall**  
(High St, Harwell, Didcot OX11 0EX)

**Tickets:** £12 (£10 for concessions)

See: [www.DidcotPhoenixDrama.co.uk](http://www.DidcotPhoenixDrama.co.uk)

### Wallingford One-Act Play Festival

The adjudicator for 2024 will be Nancy Heath (GODA).

There will be 2 Plays per evening, performed by 8 different drama groups and with the adjudications at the end of each evening.

Awards will be presented Saturday evening.

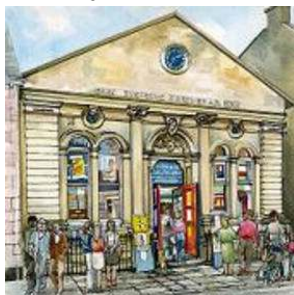
See website for details

**When:** Wed 12th to Sat 15th June at 7.30pm

**Where:** Corn Exchange Wallingford.

**Website:** [cornexchange.org.uk/drama-festival](http://cornexchange.org.uk/drama-festival)

**Email:** [DramaFestival@CornExchange.org.uk](mailto:DramaFestival@CornExchange.org.uk)



### Wychwood Players

#### Two plays by David Tristram with drinks and canapés.

The Wychwood Players are delighted to present two short plays by award winning playwright, David Tristram, with drinks and a selection of canapés to be enjoyed during the performance.



'**Peas**' is a delightful, comic exploration of a blind date set in a local pub. Will the couple find anything in common at all....?

'**The Extraordinary Revelations of Orca the Goldfish**' reveals the boring lives of Henry and his wife, Alice, may not be quite as dull as they seem! Orca bears witness to a frolic through the pair's fantasy world in this hilarious, sparkling comedy. Adult themes and moderate language.

This promises to be a sell out event so book early to avoid disappointment!

**When:** Thu 20 to Sat 22 June at 7:30pm

**Where:** The New Beaconsfield Hall, Shipton under Wychwood, OX7 6BQ

**Tickets:** [www.wychwoodplayers.com](http://www.wychwoodplayers.com)

### OxOps

#### Funny Girl.

Fanny Brice is a young and ambitious woman who dreams of becoming a star despite friends and neighbours telling her she is not pretty enough for the stage. During her rise to stardom, she captures the hearts of audiences and catches the attention of suave entrepreneur Nick Arnstein. As Fanny's career takes off, her personal life becomes intertwined with the highs and lows of show business and marriage.

Jule Styne and Bob Merrill's Funny Girl is a musical theatre classic which celebrates the exuberant and elegant flavour of Broadway in the 1910s and 20s. Combining the comic genius of Fanny Brice and featuring such beloved songs as 'People' and 'Don't Rain on my Parade',



Funny Girl tells a triumphant story of starry success and a bittersweet story of love.

**When:** 9th July – 13th July 7.30pm  
+ Matinee Sat 13th at 2.30pm

**Where:** The Oxford Playhouse, Beaumont St, OX1 2LW

**Tickets:** Playhouse Box Office 01865 305 305  
[www.oxfordplayhouse.com](http://www.oxfordplayhouse.com)

Website: [www.oxops.co.uk](http://www.oxops.co.uk)

## Thame Players

### The Ladykillers

by Graham Linehan  
Screenplay by William Rose

Professor Marcus and his gang of robbers, posing as professional musicians, rent rooms in the home of elderly Mrs Wilberforce to plan their next heist. The villains plot to involve her, unwittingly, in their crime thereby putting her life in danger, but she is more than a match for them. The police are stumped but Mrs Wilberforce becomes wise to their ruse and Marcus concludes there is only one way to keep the old lady quiet! With only her parrot, General Gordon, to help her, Mrs Wilberforce is alone with five desperate men. But who will be forced to face the music? Black comedy at its best.

'This is no pale stage rip-off, but a new written piece of perfection.' The Times

'A joy from start to finish.' Daily Express

'An exuberantly inventive evening.' The Guardian

The Ladykillers (1955) is an Ealing Comedy which starred, among others, Alec Guinness, Peter Sellers and Herbert Lom with a cameo role for Frankie Howerd. This 2011 stage adaption by Graham Linehan (best known as the creator of Father Ted) debuted in Liverpool and later moved to the Gielgud in London starring Peter Capaldi, where it received rave reviews.

**When:** Tue 9th to Sat 13th July at 7.45pm

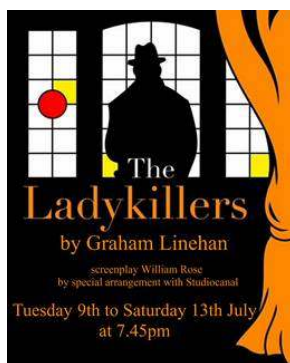
**Where:** The Players Theatre, Nelson Street, Thame, Oxfordshire, OX9 2DP

**Tickets:** £10 - £12.

Book online at [www.thameplayers.co.uk](http://www.thameplayers.co.uk) or the Information Centre at Thame Town Hall or phone 01844 212833.

Website [www.thameplayers.co.uk](http://www.thameplayers.co.uk).

By special arrangement with Studiocanal



## Banbury Cross Players Home, I'm Darling

by Laura Wade

1950s domestic bliss promises big but delivers short because, of course, it's not all it's cracked up to be.? Oh yes, and because it's 2024.?



Judy has been driven to an unusual, all-consuming lifestyle change.? She has been influenced by a childhood (rose-tinted) view of her father watching endless re-runs of 1950s films where the families were blissfully happy.? That's what Judy is seeking.? Everyone criticises her choices.? No-one understands why and no-one is supporting her.? After all her efforts to achieve domestic bliss, Judy is usurped by a very modern woman who has the sparkle she used to have and which her husband misses.

Winner of the 2019 Olivier Award for Best New Comedy, 'Home I'm Darling' by Laura Wade is a thought-provoking comedy about one woman's quest to be the perfect wife.

"...sharp, funny and strikingly perceptive play..." – What's on Stage

**When:** 11 to 13 July 2024 - 7:30pm

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

**Tickets:** from The Mill Box office on 01295 279002 or online: [www.themillartscentre.co.uk](http://www.themillartscentre.co.uk)

## St Peter's Players

**Our Annual  
Supper Show  
featuring ALICE  
A Summer Pantomime  
by Maria Jeffery and  
Mike Meldrum**

(originally written for  
Cumnor Players)

With the usual miscellany of songs and sketches.

**When:** Friday 12th & Saturday 13th July at 7.30pm

**Where:** Wolvercote Village Hall

**Tickets:** £16 (includes a fish and chip supper)  
To book call: 07398 270218

Licensed bar available



## Kingston Bagpuize D.G.

### Dressed To Kill!

An interactive, Murder Mystery

By Sarah Curran

It's 1983 and the Kingston Bagpuize Drama Group are getting ready to perform their first ever 'Fashion/Musical



Show' to raise money for new stage lighting in the village hall. The latest in high street fashion will be 'modelled via performance' by some of the group's members to a ticket paying audience. It's an ill-thought-out hybrid mess of a production and as the clock ticks towards 'curtain up' tension is mounting. Before the audience have taken their seats rivalry, discord, and conflict bubbles over and one of the drama group members ends up murdered...

Our Murder Mysteries allow the audience to quiz the suspects and try to decide who the killer is! We have a compere; a two-act scripted play and then an audience question and answer session before the 'big reveal'. There will be a different murderer for each performance.

Tickets can be purchased individually, and our online booking form then enables you to enter the names of friends also attending so we can seat you together. So, get together with friends to form a team - be that 2 or up to a max of 6 per team and come back to the 1980s with us for some sleuthing fun. 1980s dress is encouraged but optional. Prizes for the winning team and best dressed at the event.

**When:** Saturday July 13th

2.30pm - Murder Mystery with a cream tea served in the interval £17

7.30pm - Murder Mystery with hog roast, salad, dessert, tea / coffee £22

**Where:** Southmoor Village Hall, Draycott Rd, Southmoor, OX13 5BY

Doors open half an hour before each performance. with a fully licensed bar, teas and coffees and free parking.

**Tickets** must be purchased in advance: from: [www.ticketsource.co.uk](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk)

Website: <https://kbdramagroup.co.uk>

## Blewbury Players

### The Caucasian Chalk Circle by Bertolt Brecht



A gem of a play, full of action, humour, music and emotion. One of Bertolt Brecht's most celebrated plays - a wonderful story

performed by a gang of actors - in a new translation. This modern translation provides an alternative and more accessible version than the more traditional text.

A play within a play, some farmers are arguing over land and who should be in control of what happens to it. They are interrupted by a group of singers and actors who come to perform a play. The story is about a young maid, Grusha who is caught up in a rebellion and finds herself caring for the son of the Governor's wife, who has fled with her best dresses, but forgotten her son. Grusha has to flee to protect the child and goes through a number of trials, ending up being judged by a seemingly unscrupulous judge when the real mother returns to claim her child in echoes of The Judgement of Solomon. Who will win?

**When:** Wed 17 to Sat 20 July at 8:00pm

**Where:** Orchard Dene Garden Theatre, Blewbury,

**Tickets:** Tickets Adults £15, Child £8 and picnic orders from [www.blewburyplayers.co.uk](http://www.blewburyplayers.co.uk) (Box Office opens 7 June)

## Launton Village Players It's Showtime!

LVP are proud to present their 2024 summer variety show "It's Showtime!" This is a family variety show



featuring songs, comedy and dance from around the world – from Broadway to the West End and everywhere in between! Suitable for all ages, there is something for everyone.

Bring a chair or picnic blanket and come and enjoy some refreshments and a couple of hours family entertainment!

All profits will be donated to the Bicester Baby Bank and the LVP Stage Block Fund.

**When:** Saturday 20th July at 1:30pm (relaxed performance) and 6pm + Sunday 21st July at 2:30pm

**Where:** The Big Shed Theatre at Hare Leys Farm,  
OX26 5AB Just over a mile outside of Launton

**Tickets:** £12 for Adults, £6 for Children,

From [www.ticketsource.co.uk/lvp](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/lvp)

or 07864 715708

Website: [www.launtonvillageplayers.org.uk](http://www.launtonvillageplayers.org.uk)

## NATIONAL DRAMA FESTIVAL

### Albany Theatre, Coventry 18-21 July 2024

15 Award winning one act plays from all over the UK and abroad are coming together to celebrate their success with one final performance at the stunning art deco Albany Theatre, Coventry

Every group participating in the National Drama Festival will have already proved themselves to be at the top of their game: some have performed in a number of festivals and improved every time. Some have risen through the ranks of one of the 'eliminating round festivals' and come out on top, and some have just entered one festival and blown the socks off an adjudicator. Irrespective of how they've got there, they are all already winners.

This is no ordinary festival! Rather than adopting the traditional approach of a standard adjudication and the awarding of numerous prizes and trophies, this year we've decided to go deeper. Our GoDA Adjudicator, Keith Philips, will be focusing more on identifying, analysing and communicating what really worked so well within a production. He'll then dig deep with the groups throughout the festival in a number of ways, exploring with the audience how the

group achieved what they did. To use a cooking analogy, Keith will identify the magical recipe, reward the groups for their wonderful cake, and help to pass that recipe to others.

There will still be an overall winner, but much, much more to both reward the groups and pass the knowledge on.

In addition to the wonderful and diverse selection of plays that will be on offer, there will be:

- Studio spotlight sessions with other GoDA adjudicators talking about what adjudicators look for when assessing plays
- A rehearsed reading of the Derek Jacobi Award winning self-penned play followed by a Q&A with the writer and judges
- Post show Q&A sessions led by adjudicators with participating groups
- Studio spotlight session for Youth groups
- Rehearsal spaces for participating groups

Participating groups will be announced over the next few weeks on the website [www.ndfa.co.uk](http://www.ndfa.co.uk) and Facebook page

[facebook.com/NationalDramaFestivalsAssociation](https://facebook.com/NationalDramaFestivalsAssociation)

ODN is a member festival of the NDFA (National Drama Festivals Association) who organise the event (as is Henley Drama Festival) and we have TWO festival tickets worth £72 to give away. If you would like to be in with a chance to win these then please send an email to [oxforddramanetwork@gmail.com](mailto:oxforddramanetwork@gmail.com). The winners will be announced on Sunday 9th June. Fingers crossed we will have an Oxfordshire Team (or 2) to support at the event too!

## 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	Richard Winslet (Dorchester Amateur Dramatic Society)
Membership Secretary	Jess Ebberson (Kennington Amateur Dramatic Society)

### General members

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

Email: [info@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org](mailto:info@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org)

Facebook [www.facebook.com/groups/1324585987569767](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1324585987569767)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/oxfordshiredramanetwork](https://www.instagram.com/oxfordshiredramanetwork)

**N.B. For your group to add events to our website, email us for a group Username & Password.**

Email: [info@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org](mailto:info@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org)