

Oxfordshire Drama Network

Newsletter

APRIL 2018

EDITOR'S BULLETIN

In the void left by the untimely passing of our chairman I have stepped in to run things at least until the AGM.

Well the Panto Competition is over, and reviews of all the Pantomime competition entries are in this issue. Come to the AGM to find out the winners.

There are so many of our group's productions on around this time of year do try to see as many as possible, and support other groups - there's some great talent out there.

We have details (Pg 2) of a new website run by one of our members (another Mike!) although not connected to ODN, he wants to provide reviews etc for ODN member groups. It's worth taking a look at.

Talking of other Mikes, it's not me branching out at scriptwriting for DADs, that's another Mike Davies, a DADs member – but ODN do like to encourage new writers, regardless of their names!

Mike Davies



ODN AGM

20th April 2018

Drayton Village Hall

Including the results of the Pantomime competition.

Hopefully we will also have some entertainment from our member groups during the break.

We need more volunteers for committee members, in particular a secretary, and a treasurer with computer skills. Candidates should preferably be available for the duration of the drama festival 3rd – 10th June

Committee nomination forms will be sent round soon.

Email: info@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org

Facebook www.facebook.com/groups/1324585987569767

The deadline for the June issue is 20th May 2018
Contributions to info@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org

WHAT'S ON DIARY (details inside)

APRIL

- 4-7 MYCO Godspell
4-7 Jigsaw Stage Productions Oliver!
11-14 Abingdon Drama Club A More Perfect world
11-14 SINODUN PLAYERS Lettice and Lovage
11-14 St Peter's Players, 3 one-act plays
12-14 AmEgos A Bunch of Amateurs
17-21 Abingdon Operatic Society Singin' in the Rain
19-21 Kingston Bagpuize Drama Group Daisy Pulls It Off
25-28 Banbury Cross Players "People"
25-28 Compton Players Perfect Wedding
26-28 Jigsaw Stage Productions Oliver!
26-28 Wychwood Players Deathtrap

MAY

- 8-12 Thame Players Murdered To Death
16-19 Dorchester ADS Caught In Court
16-19 Bartholomew Players The Safari Party
23-26 SINODUN PLAYERS Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead
29-31 Oxford Operatic Society
1-2Jun 9 TO 5 The MUSICAL

JUNE

- 4-9 ODN Drama Festival of One Act Plays
7-10 Kennington ADS Raising the Roof
13-16 Faringdon Dramatic Society 'Faringdon Follies'
11-14 Banbury Cross Players The Cripple of Innishmaan

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ODN DRAMA FESTIVAL

ENTRIES NOW BEING ACCEPTED

Now is the time to enter your play into the ODN Drama Festival of 1 Act Plays at the Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon.

Entries before 1st May please.

Mon 4th - Sat 9th June

N.B. Tech day is Sunday 3rd June.

Plays should be between 25mins and 55mins long, but 1 Hour max is allowed, including set & strike.

Entries cost £20 per play (max 2 plays per group)

3 plays will be picked to replay on Sat 9th so please endeavour to ensure all cast can do that evening.

Awards presented are :-

Colin Dexter Rose-bowl for a special moment
Punters Prize chosen by our season ticket holders

N.B. Groups must be paid up ODN members (joining details are on our 'Downloads' page).

See ODN website to download Festival Entry form & rules



“Oxfordshire Drama Reviews”

OxfordshireDramaReviews.org.uk is a new blog that does exactly what it says on the tin. I started it in February this year, after I saw a gap in the market for timely, independent reviews of amateur theatre productions across Oxfordshire. To keep my independence, I always pay for my own ticket and beer!



My aim is to see most productions by ODN affiliated groups and by other amateur companies too. I say 'most' because clashing dates, and the odd personal commitment, mean that 100% coverage is not always possible. But that is the aspiration. If, for any reason, your show isn't listed on the ODN website or newsletter, then let them know and drop me an email if you'd like me to come along.

As well as reviews, I like to visit, and report on, productions that are still in rehearsal. I slip in, chat to the director and some of the cast, take a few pics, then slip out again, keeping disruption of your valuable rehearsal time to a minimum. Your drama group can then link to my blog article and use it for pre-show publicity if you want to. So if you'd like me to schedule a visit to your rehearsal, drop me an email.

I'm also running an occasional series of feature articles on first-time directors. So if you, or a member of your group, have directed your first production over the last year or so, and would like to share your experiences, positive and negative, for the benefit of other aspiring or newbie directors, drop me an email and we can arrange to meet and chat.

You can contact Mike Lord at EnglishFilmMaker@gmail.com

www.OxfordshireDramaReviews.org.uk

CASTING

THAME PLAYERS AUDITIONS

OH, WHAT A LOVELY WAR.

16th and 18th APRIL at 7.45

Roll up Roll up Oh its that lovely War again.

Auditions will be in the Thame Players Theatre.

Show dates 11th to 15th September

Well what's it all about then? It's an end of pier type of show, sketches, songs, back projection and a live on-stage band and all cast dressed in Pierrot costume with different hats.

Where do you fit in? Well there are no principals just characters, the story is before and during the First World War. 65 male characters and 32 female characters and 34 songs only a few solos mainly chorus so all actors and singers are welcome. Rehearsals can be fitted around holidays etc as most scenes are very short

Anymore information or unable to make the auditions contact Steve Lambell 07958 719397 or slambell59@gmail.com. Keep calm and audition on 16th and 18th April (also the social evening for that month)

BANBURY OPERATIC SOCIETY Priscilla Queen of the Desert AUDITIONS

Sunday 29th April from 2-6pm

at Christopher Rawlins School in Adderbury,

To sign up for auditions, or find out more about the show, head over to our website (under 'Whats on'):-

www.banburyoperaticsociety.co.uk

One of the most popular touring shows in UK history has JUST been made available to amateur groups. With hit songs that EVERYONE knows, including I Will Survive, It's Raining Men, Don't Leave Me This Way and Boogie Wonderland, this hilarious and colourful show follows two drag queens and a transgender woman, who contract to perform a drag show at a resort in Alice Springs, a resort town in the remote Australian desert. As they head west from Sydney aboard their lavender bus, Priscilla, the three friends come to the forefront of a comedy of errors.

Banbury Operatic Society's production of this hugely popular show will take place on 23-27 October 2018 at Wykham Theatre, Banbury Academy.

PANTOMIME REVIEWS

ODN pantomime entries in Chronological order

KINGSTON BAGPUIZE DG

The Golden Goose

How would you stage a production that calls for sets such as an enchanted wood, a cottage, a palace, a workshop and a magical white mountain? Well Kingston Bagpuize Drama Group showed how with aplomb, with their recent production of The Golden Goose at the Village Hall.



The story based on a Brothers Grimm tale, gives a nod to A Midsummer's Night's Dream and touches on some of today's environmental issues such as saving trees and crop failures through lack of rain.

The plot then is for the central character Dummling, to be given tasks to complete by the King. If he achieves them, he gets to marry the Princess Dajona (Lucy Dixon) and becomes king in due course. Sounds like a plan ...

Ruby Belcher was the lucky Dummling. A polished, confident performance for such a young girl and seemingly generous too, as he shares his supper with Oberon, the disguised Fairy King. In return Oberon gives the Golden Goose to him. The puppet goose was an inspired touch – I think Dummling 'had a hand in it'!

Sally Lacey played Titania, the Fairy Queen and Oberon was portrayed with gusto by KBDG regular Neil Browning.



So the lad decides to take the goose home to his mother, Christina (the excellent Emily Eastham) and brother Boris (Abbie Hale). They try to take the bird, but being magic it tows all three characters off to the palace, where resides King Conrad (Nick Smith) and his daughters Dajona (Lucy Dixon) and Birgit played again so confidently by Rebecca Bellis.

Now Birgit never stops laughing, possibly because of the King's trousers (!) and Dajona never starts. The first task of our hero is to make Dajona laugh, a job I wouldn't have fancied I can tell you. However laugh she does when the goose drags its three captives to the palace.

The next test is for Dummling to visit Hermit Siebenstein and get him to come up with a ship that can sail on land or water. Kate Belcher's Hermit was hysterical and it was quite clear that she revelled in the part and played it with energy and style. An excellent portrayal by Kate who also directed the production.

Anyway, completing the task, Dummling now has to visit the White Witch (Paula Eastwood). I understand she made her own costume – most impressive. She clears Dummling's face of an outbreak of spots and so he's all set for his nuptials.

The two wood nymphs that keep popping up where they are not wanted (a bit like Ant & Dec), were enthusiastically played by Abby Hallion-Gammon and Fiona Eaton. Well done to them!

There seemed to be something for everyone in The Golden Goose, even a short wrestling scene for any grappling fans.

The sets were easily the best I've seen from the group for some time. Slickly changed, cleverly designed and decorated. I'll swear I've seen the inside décor of the cottage in a David Hockney painting. Congratulations to all concerned.

ODN website: www.OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org

The story was well told and as for the costumes (except those trousers!), most were made by KBDG and were top notch.

The props were outstanding, especially the pop-up book (Katy Belcher). My favourite prop was the box where the goose laid the eggs. The empty box from where they lift the egg was a trick Derren Brown would have been proud of. Full marks all round KBDG!

Phil Leseats

WYCHWOOD PLAYERS

PETER PANTO

by Peter Webster

23 – 25 November

The scenery and costumes for Peter Panto were stunning and well thought out.

The principals were strong and carried this performance along. Special



mention has to be made of Mark Jessey who played the menacing Captain Hook. It was particularly delightful to see him chased by the smallest ever crocodile, enthusiastically played by Rowan Large. The 'Darling' children John (James Elderfield) and Michael (George Harper) gave believable performances, as did Wendy (Kirsty Plant) who, although word perfect could have been a little more commanding to keep the Lost Boys and Peter in order.

The chorus of children was very effective and the mermaids were outstanding, both in appearance and singing. The whole concept from the 'live' toys to the pirate ship was very good. The mix of ages and genders of the Lost Boys and Pirates were, with a little imagination, very effective. Smee (Vanessa Stich) held things together very well, particularly when grappling with the fairy, Tinks played by the lugubrious Stephen Colter.

The house-building and the sword-fight were well planned and executed. The scene changes could have been a little slicker as they often left the front-of-curtain acts struggling to fill the void. Good use was made of the auditorium for additional space.

The whole show was very well received by the appreciative first night audience. Congratulations to all involved particularly the director, Manyrae Jessey. Well Done.

Nigel James

ABINGDON DRAMA CLUB

Aladdin by Joe Graham

12th – 20th January 2018

A very good opening heralded the delights to come. This entertaining script, with many local references, provided a solid base for the expert cast to work on. Wishee Washee (Maria Crocker) was confident and energetic as anchor-man for the show; whipping the children into a frenzy of calling back.



The two policemen Ping (Allen Dannfald) and Pong (Lee Orchard) provided the touch of delightful idiocy to the

proceedings, whilst Widow Twankey (Duncan Blagrove) stole the show with his superb comedic timing and ever-increasing elaborate costumes. His gift for ad-libbing when the unexpected occurred was superb.

Aladdin (Rachel Tranter) as the young suitor was well played. Emperor Ming (Richard Wilson) could have been stronger and a little more terrifying, to instil fear into everyone, for looking at his daughter, Princess Baldroubabour (Alex Jenkins). Alex played her part well and was a good match for Aladdin.

Lotus Blossom (Vici Montgomery) amazed us all with her frightening 'Kung Fu' moves, whilst Abanaza (John Hawkins) was very menacing and interacted very well with the audience. The Genie of the Lamp (Leon Witcomb) was excellent in his camp portrayal of the genie, and could easily have been mistaken for David Walliams.

The Spirit of the Ring (Lynne Smith) was very effective with her restrained delivery. The chases were well executed, given the restrictions of the stage, as was the laundry scene. The 'Dance of the Seven Veils' from Widow Twankey was a sight to behold.

The principals were well supported by a competent chorus of young and not-so-young, who engaged themselves well during the dialogue with silent conversation and 'business'. The scenes and effects were excellent and good use was made of the auditorium and stairs. The costumes were outstanding; the music and singing was good.

The whole show was very well received by the appreciative first night audience, especially the children. Congratulation to all involved particularly the director, Susi Dalton. All your hard work paid off! Well Done.

Nigel James

SINODUN PLAYERS CINDERELLA

Just entering the auditorium was a bit magical: subdued blue lighting and ceiling projections enhanced the star-spangled front set while a glitter ball and Cinderella's name in lights (and the 1950s music) gave a showbiz promise of what was in store. Sure enough, no sooner had the motherly/muddy Fairy Godmother (Jean Simmons, slightly handicapped by a cold) and her lively young sidekick (Naimh Rasmussen this evening, needle sharp) introduced themselves than they were confronted by the villainous Lucius Malfeasance (Will Lidbetter) resplendent in red drape jacket, combing his teddy-boy brylcreamed locks. And when the fine painted townscape backdrop was revealed, the brightly costumed chorus dancing in front of it were bobby-soxers, while Cinderella herself was apple-pie cute in gingham and bows, and her magic transport to the ball turned out to be a motorcycle. The choice of music was more varied than the "rock'n'roll" billing might have suggested, though there were a few classics in there, and those of a certain age in the audience around me could be heard joining in the vocal interjections in "Hoots Mon!"

When the town cloth was raised we could finally see the full depth of the stage, and the busy musicians responsible, actually nestled among the stage blocks, which was symptomatic of how integrated music and stage action were throughout this vibrant show. Special credit then to musical director Rob Alderton not only for selecting and arranging (and playing) the songs (20 of them), but also for weaving in clever new lyrics - clearly projected by his singers - to suit the plot, and deftly splicing them together (I loved the segue from "Magic Moments" to Nina Simone's "My Baby..."); and none of them outstayed their welcome. Drummer Phil Marriott was never off duty, adding sound effects to the dialogue where called for, and the essential live sax (and other instruments) were played by Sue Huntingford-Ledger.

That full-depth stage provided the Hardup residence, alive with the wonky robotic creations of the Baron (David Simmons - he's played this role before!), and also, with a few changes, the royal palace for the Act 2 ball. In both versions the different levels (and

depths) were fully used. One of the magic moments of this production was when the Baron's upstage magic mirror (or 'Fairyvision' screen) came live and we saw the bequipped Prince posing on the far side, giving Cinderella the chance to sing a remote but affecting duet with him ("I'll know" from Guys and Dolls).

The step-sisters (Rebecca Cleverley & Joel Webster) were nicely contrasted in height and physique, while stepmother Sarah Enticknap, channelling Cruella DeVille in a succession of stunning gowns, gave us another magic musical moment as her butter-wouldn't-melt "Que sera sera" exploded into a raunchy "Kiss me, honey honey, kiss me". In sympathetic supporting roles were Pete Smithson as long-suffering Dandini, young Eoin Rasmussen as Cinderella's cheeky parrot, and, hardest-working of all, Fiona Huntingford-Ledger in full bell-hop outfit as Buttons, with something of the air and the likeability of a young Victoria Wood. She

provided that crucial pantomime bridge to the audience, engaging our sympathy from the start and, unphased by missed



words or misbehaving props, cheerfully kept us on her side throughout, whether in the classic wall-papering scene tacked on to the end of Act 1 (abetted by perfectly stone-faced robot Keith Yapp) or in the obligatory silly sing-along in Act 2. The ball scene seemed to involve the whole cast including the three other robots and the excellent ten-strong chorus (five from Sinodun's youth group, five from a wider age range - the youngest fairies had been sent home to bed by then) and was exuberant and tightly choreographed, making the most of the various stage spaces. "Rock around the clock" - what else? - brought us to midnight and a protracted chase sequence which almost went on too long - but then they made a joke of it. Well, I don't need to tell you the eventual outcome, but the Prince (Zoe Nielsen, over-acting manfully and never missing an opportunity to slap a thigh) and Cinderella (Poppy Jackson, a star who needed no fairy magic to help her light up the stage) made a delightful couple, and sang delightfully as well. As a final flourish from the costume department the entire human (& robot) cast re-appeared in black and white and silver for the finale, with the scarlet & yellow parrot the one touch of colour - what a picture!

Great costumes, great design, great music, great dancing, great singing (mostly) - could a jaded panto critic ask for more? Possibly, more peril; the scheming Malfeasance never suggested more than "mild jeopardy" as the parental warnings put it, and a touch of darkness might have made the happy ending all the brighter. But congratulations all round to cast and team and to seasoned director Marilyn Johnstone for putting it all together.

Edmund Bennett

WEST OXFORD PANTOMIME ASSOCIATION Sleeping Beauty

18th-20th January 2018

West Oxford Pantomime Association chose Sleeping Beauty for their 2018 production. Written by one of their own, Helen Reid, but cleverly blended with the original we all know by Charles Perrault.

Set in magical West Oxford, the show opens with a short witty film that sets the scene nicely for the entrance of all the characters involved in the opening number. How they managed to get over thirty people on that stage without mishap I shall never know.

For the set, it was good, straight and simple, easily changed and well painted. The lighting fine but the backing music gave up completely in the second half leaving the cast to sing a cappella.

The basic plot is the same as the traditional tale but interlaced with local characters. The Queen of West Oxford is expecting her first child, the Princess Aurora, this no doubt would account for the pregnant pauses throughout this production, but in fairness it was the first night of the run.

The Queen's arch enemy, Maleficent, is miffed at not being asked to Aurora's christening and so lays the curse of which we are familiar, avoid pin pricks at all costs on your sixteenth birthday - that one.

Maleficent was magnificent, played and obviously enjoyed by Angela Bloss. The only downside for me was she looked a dead ringer for Jane MacDonald and I kept expecting her to break out in song about cruising the Med. A great performance though, aided by her gang of young Imps having the time of their lives.

Jon Rail and Gesa Schenke were the King and Queen. The Kings speech was subdued and inaudible at first but did improve as the show progressed, but both failed to give the regality the parts called for.



Of the thirty plus cast, I counted only seven adults, one of which was veteran WOPA player Steve Jones who as the butler Albert looked the part and was as convincing as any professional. He had caught the eye of the Dame, Fanetta Fanfarah Pappoose La Belle, known to her friends as Fanny and responsible for the safe keeping of the young Aurora. Jake Lynch took the part to heart and made a very credible Dame indeed. Then there was John Joliffe as Tom, the wandering minstrel. He was confident, funny, a credit to the panto and should be available for parties, weddings and bar mitzvahs.

Of the younger players, Nat Dixon as Charlie, the suitor for Princess Aurora, impressed us with his enthusiastic self-assured performance. His ad libs were especially appreciated trying to help when things didn't quite go to plan. Isla Roland's role as the Princess again was remarkable for someone of her age, then all the young players were a credit to the Group and congratulations must be aimed at WOPA for encouraging so many of the local youth in the art of amateur dramatics.

The team overcame the various mishaps with humour and patience and apart from one short speech being delivered upstage and therefore impossible to hear, Alison Stibbe 's direction seemed faultless.

Sleeping Beauty provided a most enjoyable evening and judging by the friendliness of the WOPA front of house, enjoyable for them too. Well done.

Lance Bassett

FARINGDON DRAMATIC SOCIETY

Dick Whittington

by Peter Webster

The opening of this pantomime set the standard for the rest of the show and we weren't disappointed. The costumes were good

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and varied. The chorus sang, moved, engaged and related well to the main action.

Dick (Jack Metcalf) was confident; he sang and acted well. Dick's cat, Calico (Lauren Elvidge-Tappenden) was very convincing with her haughty expression and extremely good cat-like actions.



Alice (Millie Long) was positive and managed her song well, even when her microphone wasn't working. Fitzwarren (Adrian Wells) was strong and commanding throughout. The rats were exceptional, particularly Snitch (Verity Roberts) who was superb and had very good stage presence.

The Rats 'Bad' routine was something to behold.

Phobia Fitzwarren (Katie Dyet) was suitably evil in her scheming to steal the cat and swindle the King of Barbary out of a fortune. Dripping, the Cook (Joan Lee) could have been a little stronger but came into her own as the show progressed. The slapstick, cake scene was a little slow, nevertheless effective.



The pirates were effectively chaotic, lead by a very strong Black Berry (Helen Thrower) who had very powerful stage presence and audience inter-action.

There were good links between scenes in front

of the curtain and effective use was made of the auditorium for chases and entrances.

The finale routine, reprise of songs and audience participation was well organised, particularly with one of the rats pushing one of the cats out of the way to take his bow!

The live band were particularly good, managing not to drown out the singers. Sound and lighting were very effective and the scenes well portrayed.

All round, this was a brilliant show, reflecting the hard work of all involved. Congratulations.

Nigel James

WOOTTON PLAYERS

Sleeping Beauty

31st January-3rd February 2018

Wootton Players' rendition of the classic Sleeping Beauty Pantomime by Alan Frayn was a helter skelter ride from start to finish. A full speed ahead belter featuring song & dance, non-stop jokes (most of them dreadful) and a dash of really creative staging, a rare treat.

Over thirty characters somehow dovetailed on this small village hall stage, a tribute to choreographers Honor Varnom and Charlotte Pinker, and Director Teresa Miller.

Comedy was aplenty with a strong performance from Jenni Williams as queen-of-the-pun Muddles the royal gopher who whipped the mainly young audience into the palm of her hand and had them at her beck & call, and call they did.

The set was simple though adequate but the music in parts drowned a couple of songs. However this could be forgiven as I thought there were too many ditties anyway.

So, a fanfare announces the arrival of the King & Queen. The royal couple introduced the baby Rose and then tossed the bairn to Nurse Dottie for upbringing. A little harsh from Queenie I thought, played by Tracey Pearce, but an idea that could catch on. Tod Fairfield's performance as King Cactus was a tad shaky at the start but did improve as the night wore on. Then it could

have been the sight of his only child being thrown across the stage that did it.

In fairness there were some quite brilliant innovative touches in this production. The idea of using Dr Who's Tardis to transport to cast over twenty or so, then fifty years was impressive as was the St Trinians scene as the young ladies did what St Trinians girls do best, shake their booty.

The programme indicated this was a pantomime in the traditional style and so it was. A male Dame and a female principal boy refreshingly hove back to pre PC days.

As with many of these productions there are too many characters and players to list, suffice to say there were no bad apples and credit must be given to the young of Wootton who were obviously enjoying themselves as well as entertaining over 150 of the local population on the night. No prompts either as far as I could tell.

Hannah Batt-Rawden played the Good Fairy Lilac, giving a clear confident performance as did Pages Fetch & Carrie (Janet Scott & Wendy Rossiter) who provided an original comic interlude with their place names on the envelopes routine. (You had to be there).

The costumes were superb, especially the one for the 21 year old princess. Her dress was stunning. Congratulations to costume supremo Kate Schomberg.

Bad Witch was played by Ros Merriman, a convincing portrayal with Ros making the most of her part and who wouldn't with such a cracking role. Then there was Nurse Dottie Dettol the classic pantomime Dame. What a part, and faultlessly engineered by Mike Varnom. Again he connected well with the audience and clearly revelled in all those flouncy costume changes. Steady on Mike.

Other memorable moments of this well-loved story includes the scene where the Bad Witch is preparing her spell in her cauldron with her ravens. The ravens dressed in scary masks and cloaks terrorised the children as they eerily moved round the stage and the audience. Along with the other scenario where Princess Rose (Ruth Blackwell) discovers the witch at her spinning wheel in the derelict tower was quite excellent.

Finally I must mention the use of suitably clad cast members portrayed as the hedge growing around the castle during the 100 year sleep. This was ingenious and worked extremely well as Prince Alexis (Jasmine Miller) slashed at the growth with his sword and even a Light Sabre, how up to date is that?

Lance Bassett

bursting forth with the song 'Camelot'. This set the standard for the evening, with a simple but effective set, we were blasted by 'Her Evilness' Morgan Le Fay (Eleanor Tuck) who was superb and had us cowering in our seats, rapidly followed by her three stooges; Shoutalotte (Jane Eagle), Moanalotte (Ellie Douglas), and the completely off-the-wall Shriekalotte (Lucy Heath) who threw herself, mercilessly, into everything she did. The three hatched a plot to marry Guinevere to the severely wimpish Valerin-the-Vicious (Jamie Beland) highly fussed over by his screeching Mum (Debbie Robinson). The plot was thwarted by wizard Merlin (Laurence Tuck), whose age transformation was remarkable and played the two ages very well. The jester, Laughalot (Simon Bustany) had good audience interaction. Guinevere (Ellen Judson) and her maid Nell (Lizzie Mason) were suitably haughty in their encounter with Laughalot and the disguised Arthur (Caroline Wheatley), who wanted to get a glimpse of Guinevere prior to their official meeting.

Connie - Constance Clatter bottom (Steve Tuck) and her companion Teddy, the Bear, proved a good partnership, with Connie's brilliant characterisation throughout and interaction with the audience with silent support from Teddy. King Uther (Nic Robinson), Arthur's father, with entourage of knights: Adam Swiergon, Sean Moran and attendants: Rosie Posslewhite, Daniel Axford and Ellen Kavanagh, provided a great team. The street dancing of the latter three was a sight to behold!

The laboratory scene was very effective, with Lucy Heath providing the lunacy as Merlin's alter ego. The pair of guards Marlon (Gil Hilleard) and the huge, invisible Garlon surprisingly worked well, with the reveal of Garlon in the last scene, played by (Daniel Axford).

The show was enhanced with the use of an external video showing the chase between good and evil down to the local pub. The haunted bedroom scene was very good, winding up the audience into a frenzy of calling back. Finally, the 'Blind Date' scene with trepidation from the selected random audience members was very well played.

The whole show was a very well received, and the modern songs – selected by Eleanor Tuck were well performed. The costumes and makeup were excellent, as was the versatile scenery. A great achievement by the group, ably directed by Mike Moran and produced by Steve Tuck reflecting an enormous amount of work which went into this show. Congratulations to all.

Nigel James

STANTON HARCOURT DRAMA GROUP CAMELOT by Ben Crocker

22 – 24 February 2018

One of the most important features of a pantomime is enjoyment, and SHDG certainly portrayed that element of enjoying what they were doing.

The show started in an unexpected way with the Director (Mike Moran) appearing in front of the curtains in a DJ and then



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REVIEWS

BANBURY CROSS PLAYERS

My Boy Jack by David Haig

The Mill, Banbury 7th
-10th February 2018

Having seen David Haig's My Boy Jack on television a couple of weeks ago, I was intrigued how BCP would present this poignant epic within the constraints of the Mill stage.



I needn't have worried. A combination of directorial talent from Helen Watson and Kerrie McCormick along with what can only be described as inspired set design, delivered a memorable evening.

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Many people will know the story of Rudyard Kipling's staunch support for Britain in the Great War and how anxious he was that his son should take up arms to fight the cause, despite him being so young.

John 'Jack' his son has chronic myopia and without his spectacles can hardly see a thing. Through lobbying and influence Kipling manages to acquire a commission in the Irish Guards for his son with tragic consequences.

Philip Fine played Rudyard Kipling with panache. He took this huge challenging role, dissected the whole thing and reassembled it as his own. From the very start when he bursts forth into song, with a slight nod to Bruce Forsythe I thought, he went from strength to strength. An excellent performance, especially when a pair of John's spectacles was lost under a chair in the front row of the audience. Couple of ad-libs and back to the plot, don't you just love am dram?

Kipling's wife Carrie (Deborah Watson) had our eternal sympathy as the mother of the doomed Jack, unforgiving of her husband for forcing his son to go to war.

Joe Deakin played John Kipling. A remarkable accomplishment by this young man with such a large part to deliver, well done sir.

The play is set mainly in 'Batemans' the Kipling's family home in East Sussex. The set was stylish with just the right hint of affluence, but how was this going to metamorphosis into a battlefield?

Hey Presto, within a minute, the genius of set designer Chris Garrett took us from a sitting room in East Sussex to dodging bullets and whiz bangs on the Western Front. Stunning, and probably the slickest major scene change I've witnessed outside the West End.

With accompanying sounds and lighting, the trench scenes were also executed brilliantly. The creative juices of BCP must have been flowing with force of a Tsunami. From the slides announcing the scenes in the form of period postcards to the projected war scenes and rainfall, the ambience was electric.

The sound crew too must have been on overtime as they worked above the call of duty filling the hall with atmospheric background noises from the constant ticking of the unseen clock at Batemans to the incessant artillery fire in the trenches.



The dug out scene, except for some dodgy Irish accents, was touching as the troops, including our Jack prepared to go over the top. Understandably they weren't too pleased, but I thought the language was a little 'over the top' too. Perhaps it's a generation thing.

Back at Batemans Jack has been reported missing, and for two years the Kiplings have been interviewing whoever might have news of their son. Enter Guardsman Bowe, he had witnessed the demise of poor Jack and told his tale

through his tortured mind with great fervour. At least his story brought closure to the family.

John McCormick as Bowe played the part of his career. I have seen John in many a role but never as convincing as with such passion as he played Bowe, the half crazy soldier on sick leave and terrified he will have to return to the Front. If Banbury had a Walk of Fame I would vote for John's star to be laid on it immediately. A master class in acting as far as I was concerned.

The play continued for two more scenes but the fire had gone out. The wedding of Elsie, Jack's sister seemed strangely unnecessary but the ending piece was important, set in 1933 with the BBC announcing Hitler's rise to be Chancellor of Germany and Rudyard at last realising what a waste his son's death was as war looms again.

Tonight was the first night of the run and unfortunately the hall was only about half full. Shame, the good people of Banbury didn't know what they were missing.

My Boy Jack is a milestone in the history of BCP, and shows what am dram can produce..

Lance Bassett

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

MYCO

(Musical Youth Company of Oxford)

Godspell



Don't miss our exciting new production of the groundbreaking rock opera Godspell.

Based on the Gospel of St. Matthew, with music by three-time Grammy and Academy Award winning composer Stephen Schwartz (Wicked, Pippin), Godspell took the world by storm when it opened in 1971.

A compelling tale of friendship, loyalty and love, this joyous, high-spirited show dramatises the teachings and last days of Jesus in a variety of musical styles including rock 'n roll, R&B and ragtime! It features hit songs including 'Day by Day', 'Prepare Ye The Way Of The Lord', 'By My Side', 'Save The People' and 'All For The Best'.

When: Wed 4 - Sat 7 April at 7.30pm + 2.30pm Sat

Where: Oxford Playhouse

Tickets: online at oxfordplayhouse.com

JIGSAW STAGE PRODUCTIONS

Oliver!

Join young orphaned Oliver Twist as he escapes from the hungry world of the orphanage only to be caught up in the London underworld of theft and violence in Fagin's 'family' of child pickpockets!



With spirited timeless songs like, 'As Long as He Needs Me', 'Food, Glorious Food' and 'You Gotta Pick a Pocket or Two', 'Oliver!' is a musical classic and a family favourite.

Performance dates are :-

At The Beacon Wantage:

4th – 7th April 7.30pm + 2.30pm Sat

Tickets available from:

The Beacon, Wantage or Bretts Chemist, Grove.

At Cornerstone, Didcot:

26th – 28th April 7.45pm + 2.30pm Sat

Tickets from The Cornerstone, Didcot

Further information from 01235 767509

Website: www.JigsawstageProductions.co.uk

ABINGDON DRAMA CLUB

A More Perfect world

a new play by Tony Green



This new play from Tony Green ('Another Man's Eden' and 'Thou Shalt Not Suffer') is being staged in tribute to those who served in World War 1 which ended 100 years ago this year.

The play skips between the war years and interviews taking place many years later with veterans. It looks at the real life experiences of those who took part across the theatre of war, their recollections and feelings and how perhaps the "myths" of what we now perceive from a distance are at odds with the reality for those who were there, and are overtaking what actually happened.

ODN website: www.OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org

When: Wed 11th - Sat 14th April @ 7:30pm

Where: Unicorn Theatre, Abbey Buildings, Abingdon

Tickets: available from March -

£10, £8 concessions (60+, under 12s, Students, ADC members) Group Bookings: Groups of 10 and over - All tickets £8 (£8.55 online)

Book online: www.Abingdon-Drama-Club.com

Email: tickets@unicornboxoffice.org.uk

Phone: 0845 4636638

The Bookstore, The Abingdon Precinct (15 Bury St), Abingdon

N.B. The Unicorn Theatre does not have numbered seats. All tickets are sold as unreserved seating.

SINODUN PLAYERS

Lettice and Lovage

by Peter Shaffer



When: 11th–14th April 7.45pm

Where: Corn Exchange, Market Place, Wallingford OX10 0EG

Tickets: from www.cornexchange.org.uk

ST PETER'S PLAYERS,

Three one-act plays



The Merry Regiment of Women

by Rae Shirley

Shakespeare's Kate and Petruchio, Romeo and Juliet, daring Henry V, plus Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra, combine to produce a mad and merry, totally irreverent play.

Poor Yorick by Phil Mansell

Yorick the jester is not dead – he's on the road dying a death as he pioneers a new kind of comedy called stand-up. When this fails, he is persuaded by his tavern wench girlfriend Bess to return to Elsinore and get his old job back. But when he arrives he finds there have been many changes, and he becomes embroiled in Hamlet's plans for revenge.

Melons at the Parsonage

by Nick Warburton.

Two amateur drama groups become joint winners of a play festival. A tie-break involves the groups performing an extract from their own entry and then an excerpt from the opposing team's play, but the pieces are very different. They compete again with hilarious results but the outcome is still a tie.

This time a rugby scrum will decide the winner!

3 directors, 3 plays, 1 theme : **performance.**

When: Wed 11th April to Sat 14th April at 7.30pm

Where: Wolvercote Village Hall.

Website: www.StPetersPlayers.co.uk

AMEGOS A Bunch of Amateurs

by Nick Newman
& Ian Hislop

Washed-up Hollywood star Jefferson Steele is deceived by his agent into playing King Lear in an amateur community production in a small English town. Expecting a suite at a fancy hotel, the actor finds himself lodging in a bed and breakfast. Steel's arrogance and pretensions barely allow him to conform to such indignities as rehearsing Shakespeare in a barn. But, among the enthusiastic locals, he slowly comes to rethink some of his assumptions and look at life in a whole new way.

When: 12th - 14th April at 7.30pm

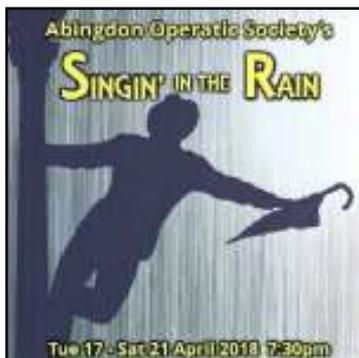
Where: King Alfred's Academy Theatre, Wantage

Tickets: from www.AmEgosTheatre.com



ABINGDON OPERATIC SOCIETY Singin' in the Rain

Singin' in the Rain rains down delight, capturing the waning days of the silent screen era as they give way to new-fangled "talkies." With The Jazz Singer premiere making Hollywood frantic, the studios are forced to suddenly change all the movie-making rules at once, to accommodate sound. In doing so, they leave silent pictures - and some of their stars - behind.



When Monumental Studios turns silent 'The Duelling Cavalier' into 'The Dancing Cavalier', a musical picture, they are faced with a problem: their star, Lina Lamont can't sing, and can't even really talk. Lina's voice sounds something like nails on a blackboard. Enter Kathy Selden, an aspiring actress whose dulcet tones are able to cover-up the harshness of Lina Lamont's

Singin' in the Rain includes some of the best-loved comedy routines, dance numbers, and love songs ever written, including 'Good Mornin', 'Make 'em Laugh,' and - of course - the show-stopping dance number, 'Singin' in the Rain.'

When: Tue 17 to Sat 21 April 7.30pm + 2.30pm Sat

Where: Amey Theatre, Abingdon

Tickets: Online via www.abingdonoperatic.co.uk

Phone TicketLine 0333 666 3366 (booking fees)

Balcony seats (unreserved) from Newbury Building Society in West St Helen Street, Abingdon

KINGSTON BAGPUIZE DRAMA GROUP Daisy Pulls It Off

by Denise
Deegan

Daisy Pulls It Off is a clever, funny parody of wholesome adventure stories about

life in girl's English boarding schools, such as those by Angela Brazil and Enid Blyton's Malory Towers stories. The production is set in the 1920s.

Energetic Daisy Meredith, a girl from a poor background, is forced to face and overcome snobbish prejudice and schoolgirl pranks from the wealthier girls.

She and her best friend, zany Trixie Martin, search for the missing treasure that could save the fortunes of the exclusive Grangewood School for Young Ladies.

Along the way, Daisy overcomes false accusations, saves the lives of her enemies and discovers that the mysterious stranger seen around the grounds is her long-lost father.

The original production of the play tested at the Nuffield Theatre in 1983, then ran for 1,180 performances at the Globe Theatre.

There will be a fully licensed bar as well as tea and coffee.

When: 19th to 21st April at 7.30pm Thur & Friday,
2.30 and 7pm on Saturday.

Where: Southmoor Village Hall,

Tickets: via www.kbdgshow.com/daisy-pulls-it-off/
or by calling 01865 736913



BANBURY CROSS PLAYERS

"People"

by Alan Bennett

Dorothy's inheritance is an old, run-down mansion she can't afford to maintain. She and her sister have various attempts at resolving the issue, including "gifting" it to the National Trust; selling it to a



property developer, or film-making of a less than salubrious nature with comings and goings on the family four-poster bed. Underground rumblings from a disused coalmine, the discovery of a large number of (still full) chamber pots and an untimely visit from the Bishop make for a show full of fruitful conflict.

Alan Bennett successfully blends satire with nostalgia to produce a thought-provoking and entertaining piece of theatre.

BCP are one of the first amateur companies to perform this funny and touching play after it completed its National Theatre tour in 2015.

When: 25-28 Apr 2018, 7.30pm

No admittance after curtain up until interval!

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

Tickets £ 10.00/£ 11.00 (no concessions Fri/Sat)
from www.themillartscentre.co.uk (+booking fees)

Website: www.banburycrossplayers.org.uk

COMPTON PLAYERS

Perfect Wedding

by Robin Hawdon

Bill wakes up in the bridal suite on his wedding morning to find an extremely attractive naked girl in bed beside him. In the depths of a stag night hangover, he can't even remember meeting her. Before he can get her out, Rachel, his bride to be, arrives to get ready for her big day. In the ensuing panic, the girl is locked in the bathroom and the best man is persuaded to claim her. But he gets confused and introduces the chamber maid to Rachel as his date. The crisis escalates to nuclear levels by the time the mother of the bride and the best man's actual girlfriend arrive.....

When: 25th to 28th April 7.30pm

Where: Compton Village Hall, Burrell Rd, Compton, Newbury RG20 6NP

Tickets: £9 (£8 conc). *All tickets £8 Saturday*
online: boxoff.co.uk (NO booking fee!)
by Phone: 07554 842207

via email: boxoffice@comptonplayers.co.uk

Website: www.comptonplayers.co.uk

ODN website: www.OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org

WYCHWOOD PLAYERS

Deathtrap

by Ira Levin

Thriller playwright Sydney Bruhl hasn't had a success to his credit for years. So when a script arrives from an unknown dramatist he fumes with jealousy much to the consternation of his wife, Myra. How far would he go to achieve another hit?

In a plot that twists and turns with more surprises than an audience may bargain for, we invite you to come and decide who or what is true or false

When: Thur 26th to Sat 28th April

Where: New Beaconsfield Hall, Shipton under Wychwood near Burford.

Tickets: Available later - check online :-

Website: www.WychwoodPlayers.com



THAME PLAYERS

Murdered To Death

by Peter Gordon

This fast-paced comedy promises to be a hit with cast and audiences alike. Aside from Joan Maple, Colonel Craddock and his acerbic wife Margaret, it also features a femme fatale, a dashing frenchman, a niece and her aunt and of course, the butler. Toss in the local village bobby and an idiot Inspector and you have all the ingredients for a great night's entertainment.

Murder is afoot, but who did it?, And can the inspector work it out? In fact, can the inspector work anything out?

When: Tue 8th – Sat 12th May at 7.45pm

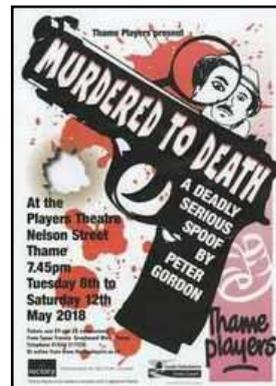
Where: The Players Theatre, Nelson Street, Thame, OX9 2DP

Tickets: cost £9 and £8 (concessions)

Online: www.ticketsource.co.uk/event/227161

or from Spear Travels 01844 217228

Website: www.ThamePlayers.co.uk/



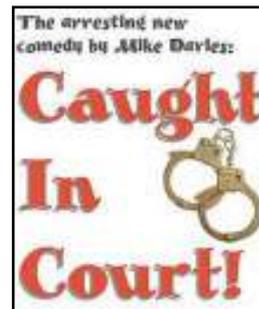
DORCHESTER ADS

Caught In Court

An arresting new comedy

DADS premiere the arresting new comedy from Mike Davies (of Dorchester)

Two couples sharing enduring friendships but two have guilty secrets and both have been arrested. They dare not tell their partners. What should



they do and will their secrets be exposed? They are about to rub shoulders with some 'interesting' characters. Will their lives be changed for ever?

When: 16 May 2018 - 7:45pm - 19 May 2018 - 7:45pm

Where: Dorchester on Thames Village Hall.

Tickets: from www.dads.org.uk.

BARTHOLOMEW PLAYERS

The Safari Party

by Tim Firth

This is a fast-moving, hilarious comedy by the man who wrote Calendar Girls and who has worked with Willy Russell and Alan Ayckbourn. It features 3 households in Cheshire who hold a safari dinner party, with one course in each house. Young "farming" brothers Daniel and Adam



are trying to get their lives on a sound footing after a traumatic past. Lol and Esther are brash and vulgar, but in search of the rural idyll, while their long-suffering, but mischievous daughter Bridget forges her own path. Inga is an antiques dealer, with a creative streak. They don't get on and when the secrets of the table are revealed, it all kicks off.

The Telegraph called it "a cracking comedy – cunningly constructed, thematically rich and above all blissfully funny".

The Guardian said it "becomes a brilliant expose of bourgeois self-deceit, brought to a pitch of squirming social embarrassment".

Friday is our Charity Supper Show - this time for Eynsham Community Primary School PTA

When: 16 - 19 May 2018 - 7:30pm

Where: Eynsham Village Hall, Back Lane, Eynsham, OX29 4QW

Tickets – for **WED, THU & SAT** nights

Price: £9.00 (concessions £8.00)

Available: from Denise Santilli, 07990 537462,

bart.players@gmail.com, ONLINE:-

www.ticketsource.co.uk/bartholomewplayers

or from Evenlode DIY in Eynsham

Tickets: for **FRIDAY** 18th May – must be purchased by 14th May

Doors open: 6.10pm, Food served: 6.30pm – 7.30pm, Performance: 7.30pm

Advance Tickets only: £18.00

from Denise Santilli, 07990 537462,

bart.players@gmail.com (not available online)

Website: www.BartholomewPlayers.co.uk

SINODUN PLAYERS

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

by Tom Stoppard

The play expands upon the exploits of two minor characters from Shakespeare's Hamlet, the courtiers Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The action of the play takes place mainly "in the wings" of Shakespeare's, with brief appearances of major characters from Hamlet who enact fragments of the original's scenes. Between these episodes Rosencrantz & Guildenstern voice their confusion at the progress of events occurring onstage without them and become further bemused by the appearance of the troupe of actors and their enigmatic leader. In turns funny and thought-provoking, this play will form a great part of our 70th Anniversary year.

When: Wed 23rd – Sat 26th May 7.45pm

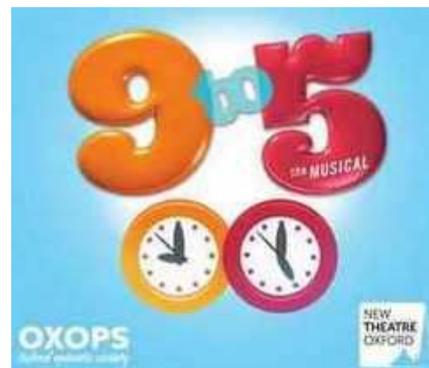
Where: Corn Exchange, Market Place, Wallingford OX10 0EG

Tickets: from www.cornexchange.org.uk

OXFORD OPERATIC SOCIETY

9 TO 5 The MUSICAL

Feisty, fun and oh so fabulous... 9 to 5 the musical is a hilarious comedy based on the hit 1980's movie that centres on three co-workers who take control of their office and learn there is nothing they can't do, even in a man's world.



Meet Violet, Doralee and Judy who come together in an unlikely friendship where they live out their wildest fantasy-giving their sexist boss the boot!

Featuring original numbers from Dolly Parton's Oscar, Tony® and Grammy Award nominated score including Backwoods Barbie, Shine Like the Sun and the original hit song 9 to 5.

Leave the daily grind behind, grab your friends and come to the theatre for a night of outrageousness, romance and a lot of heart!

When: Tue 29th May to Sat 2nd June 7:30, + 2:30 Sat mat

Where: New Theatre, Oxford

Tickets: from The New Theatre via

www.atgtickets.com (Booking fee AND ticket fees apply - typically 25% on 2 tickets)

Website: www.oxfordoperatic.org.uk

ODN DRAMA FESTIVAL

OF ONE ACT

PLAYS

2 or 3 one act plays per evening Monday-Friday.

3 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 Ian Sarginson a GODA member. After each play (Mon-Fri), the Adjudicator will give a short review and workshop with the cast.

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

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

When: Mon 4th - Sat 9th June 7.30pm

Where: Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon, OX14 3HZ

Tickets: £7 each for Mon-Fri, £9 Sat Gala night,

Punter's Season ticket: £28 for Mon to Fri tickets

Tickets will be available nearer the time from :-

'The Bookstore' in Abingdon precinct,

email info@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org

or telephone 01235 821351



KENNINGTON ADS

Raising the Roof

KADS will be 'Raising the Roof' this summer with a show full of uplifting songs from across genres.

A retiring collection will be taken for Ronald McDonald House Oxford, their chosen charity for this year.

When: 7th to 10th June, Thu, Fri, Sat at 7.30pm
matinees Sat & Sun at 2pm

Where: Kennington village centre.

Tickets: from Box Office on 01865 739025 or by email: boxoffice@kenningtonads.org.uk.

For further updates, visit

www.facebook.com/KenningtonADS



FARINGDON DRAMATIC SOCIETY

'Faringdon Follies'

800 years ago, in 1218, Faringdon received its Market Charter from Henry III and became a Market Town.

70 years ago, in 1948, Faringdon Dramatic Society was founded.

This year, Faringdon Dramatic Society will present a show to commemorate both occasions, in Lord Faringdon's beautiful Buscot Park Theatre.

Let's celebrate!

A local pageant meets 'Noises Off' in this delightful show.

Enjoy a picnic, before the show, in the grounds of Buscot House.

When: 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, June

Where: Buscot Park Theatre, Buscot House, Oxfordshire.

Tickets: £10, to include a glass of wine, from:-
online at www.faringdondramatic.org.uk
or 'The Gifted Magpie', 6 London Street, Faringdon

BANBURY CROSS PLAYERS

The Cripple of Innishmaan

by Martin McDonagh

In 1934, on a small island off the West coast of Ireland, the arrival of a Hollywood film crew on a neighbouring island gives local youngsters the chance to escape the island and head for the USA.

Local disabled orphan, Billy, able and bright, and in love with local girl Helen, is cared for by two aged aunts. He is derided by the locals and protected by his aunts. Billy, desperate to audition, to break away from the bitter tedium of his daily life, persuades a local fisherman to take him to the neighbouring island by telling him he is dying of TB. Billy is cast in the film and goes to the USA.

What does he discover about Hollywood? Will he return home to 'get the girl'?

This bleakly comic tale, with vivid images of all aspects of human life, where truth is uncovered gradually, successfully plucks at your heartstrings with deep, dark and powerful humour.

When: 11-14 July 2018, 7.30pm

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

Tickets: £ 10.00/£ 11.00 (no conc Fri/Sat)

from www.themillartscentre.co.uk (+booking fees)

Website: www.BanburyCrossPlayers.org.uk