

# Oxfordshire Drama Network

## Newsletter



APRIL 2017

### EDITOR'S BULLETIN

We have a lot of reviews this time. Mainly because all the Pantomime entries are here, plus a few others. Don't forget to ask ODN if you want your production reviewed.

And don't forget to put your plays/musicals etc onto the ODN website as well as using our Facebook page.

*Mike Davies*

### Chairman's Thoughts

I've had a particularly good time recently by visiting ODN Groups that required a bit of a journey - only just making 'Curtain Up' at one venue because of the Friday night traffic. I've seen some really entertaining Pantomimes and indeed wonder why they don't enter the ODN Pantomime Competition. And may I make a plea for the Community Song to be an easily recognisable tune? - Your audience is probably made up of non-singers who can't cope with reading new words from a song sheet and singing them to an unfamiliar tune. We all love to have a rousing sing song near the end of a pantomime we have all enjoyed.

We at ODN are pleased to welcome Musical Youth Company of Oxford to our Drama Network - I have been to several of their productions over the last few years and they have all been excellent.

Lots of ODN Productions are on in the coming weeks, I'll get to as many as I can but sadly some are overlapping one another - when Theatres and Halls often have to be booked a year in advance it's hard to avoid this clash. But get to as many other groups' productions as you can, you may be surprised at the quality and sheer entertainment value.

I hope to see you all at the ODN AGM on 28th and welcome you with a drink from 7.30 onwards (see details below)

*Deidre*

**ODN AGM Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April**

**Drayton Village Hall,  
Lockway, Drayton, OX14 4LG**

**Meet us at 7.30pm for a welcome drink  
8.00pm the meeting will start.**

**During the evening, the Panto Competition  
results will be announced.**

The deadline for the June issue is 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017  
Contributions to [info@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org](mailto:info@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org)

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

#### APRIL

5-8 Jigsaw Stage Productions  
20-22 **Made in Dagenham The Musical**

5-8 *AmEgos Theatre*  
**Sweeney Todd;**

5-8 St Peter's Players  
**"A Bad Dream"**

11-15 *Musical Youth Company of Oxford*  
**The Hired Man**

18-22 Abingdon Operatic Society  
**"Annie" The Musical**

26-29 *Banbury Cross Players*  
**The Tempest**

27-29 The Wychwood Players  
**The Vicar of Dibley**

27-29 *Kingston Bagpuize Drama Group*  
**An evening of comedy & drama**

#### MAY

9-13 *Thame Players*  
**Absent Friends**

10-13 Faringdon Dramatic Society  
**My Friend Miss Flint**

12,13 *WSMC*  
**19,20 Magical Musicals**

17-20 Bartholomew Players  
**"Humble Boy"**

17-20 *Sinodun Players*  
**Return to the Forbidden Planet**

31May *Oxford Operatic Society*  
-3Jun **Avenue Q**

#### JUNE

5-10 **ODN Drama Festival**

21-24 Dorchester A.D.S.  
**Agatha Crusty and the Village Hall Murders**

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# ODN Drama Festival 2017

Mon 5<sup>th</sup> – Sat 10<sup>th</sup> June, Unicorn Theatre

Time to start thinking about entering a One Act Play into this year's Drama Festival at the unique Unicorn Theatre in the old Abbey in Abingdon



Entry form with Festival rules is available for downloading from our website (see article on main page – or the 'Downloads' page).

Don't forget the ODN

FACEBOOK pages:-



1. Productions and Events  
[www.facebook.com/oxfordshiredramanetwork](http://www.facebook.com/oxfordshiredramanetwork)
2. Closed Members only Group  
[www.facebook.com/groups/1324585987569767](http://www.facebook.com/groups/1324585987569767)

## Oxfordshire Drama Wardrobe



ODW is having a Grand Sale of theatrical costumes and fancy dress costumes on Sat 20th and Sun May 21st from 10.30 am to 3.30pm at 25a Steventon Storage Depot Hanney Road Steventon Oxfordshire OX13 6AP.

From Romans to 1970s including character costumes, historical costumes, vintage wear, uniforms and miscellaneous hats and accessories.

Accessories from £1. Costumes from £5

Many bargains to be had. There is plenty of parking."

[odwc1938@gmail.com](mailto:odwc1938@gmail.com)

## COLIN DEXTER

Norman Colin Dexter was born on September 29th 1930 in Stamford, where he attended a local school. After his military service in the Royal Corps of Signals, he studied at Christ's College Cambridge, graduating in 1953 with a degree in classics. He became a very popular and successful teacher of classics; even after the success of the Morse series he always said that 'teaching is more satisfying than writing'. Deafness

brought an early halt to his teaching career, resulting in him becoming a writer of text books and an examiner.

During a rain soaked holiday in Wales he started to write a detective story to relieve the boredom he felt; the end result was "The last bus to Woodstock", published in 1975. This was the first book in an incredibly successful series of thirteen novels, all featuring the irascible detective Morse, who enjoyed crosswords, real ale and classical music, much to his sergeant's puzzlement.

The character of Morse was taken up by ITV and made into a series of thirty three feature length stories, starring John Thaw as Morse and Kevin Whately as Lewis. These, as well as being one of the most successful detective series ever, inspired the follow-up series "Endeavour" and were sold across the world. It's true to say that Dexter's Morse changed the landscape of detective fiction.

We at ODN loved having Colin as our Patron. He will be remembered by many of our Members for his witty speeches at the end of our Drama Festival Gala evenings (see photo from 2012 ODN Drama Festival) and for his charming personality.

We will all miss him

Colin Dexter died at his Oxford home on March 21st 2017.



## Guy Briggs Receives an MBE

Guy Briggs started life 'on the boards' aged 10 with encouragement from his artistic family. His Mother was a voice coach and his Father an amateur actor. Guy, himself, acted and played the piano.

He now Directs and Choreographs for Oxford Operatic Society and Musical Youth Company of Oxford and is now their resident Director.

His choreography for Oxford Operatic Society's production of 42nd Street was spectacular.

He teaches Drama at Dr Radcliffe's Primary School in Steeple Aston, near Bicester, where he is deputy Head Teacher. He is convinced that the confidence children gain from performing on stage reflects in their school work too.

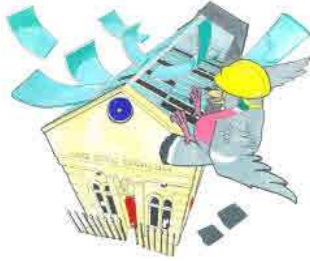
Guy was awarded an MBE in the latest New Year's Honours List, in recognition of his work to combat LGBT bullying in schools, through the charity, Stonewall.

We heartily congratulate him.

## THE CORN EXCHANGE WALLINGFORD ROOF APPEAL

### WE NEED YOUR HELP PLEASE

Wallingford's historic Corn Exchange is embarking on a major project costing £500,000 to replace the roof on the Grade II listed Victorian building. The existing glass roof, the 1856 original, leaks badly in poor weather and is damaging the building's interior and infrastructure.



The Corn Exchange Wallingford Roof Appeal has been launched and a number of fund raising events will be held during the year to secure the finances.

A dedicated team of volunteers has already started the process of applying for various grants and will be appealing to local businesses for sponsorship.

Work is expected to start in June and will be completed in the autumn. The annual Wallingford Drama Festival and Sinodun Players' summer and autumn productions, *Odyssey* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* have now been postponed till 2018.

So, if you love theatre and cinema and would like to donate to help preserve this very important amenity for Wallingford and surrounding area, here's how to do it:-

Cash or cheques (payable to Sinodun Players) can be placed in a special box in the Corn Exchange foyer, or post cheques to fundraising co-ordinator John Warburton, Corn Exchange, Market Place, Wallingford OX10 0EG. Donations can be made by BACS to Sinodun Players, National Westminster Bank, sort code 60-22-19, Account No. 66525705 (ref 'roof fund').

Donations can also be made via  
[www.justgiving.com/@sinodun-players](http://www.justgiving.com/@sinodun-players).

For more info email  
[StopSinginginTheRain@cornexchange.org.uk](mailto:StopSinginginTheRain@cornexchange.org.uk).

## REVIEWS

### PANTO COMP ENTRIES

## WEST OXFORD PANTOMIME ASSOCIATION

### A Lad in Oatlands Park

by Mark Norman

A capacity audience in West Oxford Community Hall which was festooned with laundry, eagerly anticipated the filmed prologue. Called 'The Legend of the Lamp' it was a perfect introduction - 3 nasty witches put Aladdin in the Lamp 'helped' by 9 Cave children and 7 Park children.

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A present-day Aladdin (Angela Bloss) was clear and confident (slightly odd thin white cotton bloomers instead of present day trousers - perhaps I'm missing a point?) Widow Twankey (Graham Sykes) occasionally slowed the pace but his outrageous Dame costume drew many laughs. Wishy Washy (John Joliffe) was excellent as Aladdin's brother. Suddenly the stage is filled with happy, well-drilled children singing 'With a Little Help From my Friends'. Not quite sure why but Aladdin ended this scene with a well-aimed 'pie' in his face. As office Manager Seymour Holes (Jon Rail) raised a laugh when he emerged from his desk showing a nice pair of stocking clad legs, Rita (Hannah Wilson) made a very convincing secretary.



WOPA never does things by halves and produced a 2nd Dame as Matilda (Jake Lynch) in gold lame platform heels. Matilda is mother to Badroulbador.

Evil Hugh Jars (say it quickly) (Kelly Faye) wants to dig up Oatlands Park. Lots of fracking jokes Seven Gnomes help Aladdin to find the Magic Lamp and the Genie (Sophie Ruggiero) appears in a puff of smoke. Again I'm not sure why she had huge rollers in her hair and a modern mac - I thought the Prologue said she went into the Lamp many years ago?

In Act 2 Aladdin and Balroulbador declare their love for one another and the Genie transforms the Laundry into the Best B&B in Oxford. (although they didn't get smarter clothes) A lively full stage for 'I'm a Believer' and then the seven Gnomes meet an acrobatic Dog (Rebecca Marsh) in the Park. More 'fracking' jokes from Dharm (little) (Nat Dixon) and Dharm (large) (Steve Jones), a great contribution to the humour in this panto. The two Dames, Matilda and Widow Twankey meet up and sing 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire' - odd words for two Dames - I think I'd have preferred 'There is nothing like a Dame'

Then all on stage for 'Park Life' most apt - good well rehearsed movement and enthusiasm. Children's Director, Lois Muddiman tamed and trained 21 children to take to the stage with confidence. Nice slick scene changes and the Henri vac running gag served as a front cloth distraction. One small point, no one had a change of clothes even though the action took place over several days and part of the Dame's fun is usually her outrageous gowns

However a very appreciative WOPA audience left the Hall having enjoyed an evening of panto fun.'

Deidre Jones

# FARINGDON DRAMATIC SOCIETY

## Arthur's Adventures or Merlin to the Rescue

by Peter Webster



Curtains open to a Medieval set and a full stage of Courtiers wearing colourful, shiny tabards singing 'Hard Times'. Mrs Tickleme (Bex Massie) in bright pink feather trimmed gown asks the audience to shout 'Tickle me' every time she appears - nice and easy to remember and they do! Mrs T is housekeeper to Sir Jikal-Trusse (again say it fast) (Gary Field) and a larger than life Dame. A great fanfare announces the arrival of the Knights of the Round Table singing their rousing song in silver sequined hoods and tunics.

Merlin (Sarah Couzens) in sparkling purple tells the Courtiers that the man who releases the Sword from the stone in the forest will be their next King.

On a frontcloth, Morgan Le Fay (evil, glamorous Suzanna Carter) tells her son Robin (Dom Allum) that the Sword and the Throne will be his with the help of her four Black Knights. Who wore black sequined tabards, white faces and smoky black eyes.

In Merlin's cave, Bubo, the Owl, watches Merlin make a custard pie. Eventually, the pie ends up in Merlin's face but was placed so carefully (on this evening) that the surprise fell flat - timing is everything.

A rather long intro to 'I'll Be Watching You' and lack of movement rather held up the pace and the band still seems loud with the drummer drowning out the words.

Then stirring marching music for the Dark Knights and lovely strobe lighting for the Evil enchantress.

Mrs Tickleme brilliantly sings 'It Don't Impress me Much' and in Merlin's Wood the Black Knights chase him around the Hall, catch him and put him in jail where he sings 'I Have a Dream'

The curtains open to a really good freeze from the whole cast and the Community Song was 'Thank you very much' but we needed the words to sing from.

In the Forest 'You're a Real Nowhere Man' is sung by the Evil Enchantress and the Dark Knights to her son - I found this sad and a trifle bullying! Then the Knights of the Round Table seize the Ring from the Evil Enchantress and the Dark Knights collapse - they are then banished by Merlin and Arthur is pronounced King.

The finale was a lovely full stage singing 'Thankyou very much' - King Arthur appearing in regal red and silver, sending the capacity audience happily home.

Deidre Jones

# DORCHESTER AMATEUR DRAMATIC SOCIETY

## Aladdin



There was a strong opening to the show by Abanazar, played by John Cornelius, who from the start had the audience booing him. A very believable (and tuneful) villain. Although I did feel the opening song was a little under-rehearsed (or maybe it was just first night nerves?).

Wishee-Washee, played by Rachel Winslet Morris, also gave a very good performance which was full of energy and connected very well with the audience, and had a lovely singing voice.

The pyrotechnics for the entry of the Genie of the Lamp, played by Rosemary Mills, worked well and the timing was spot on. The desert dance was good and I particularly liked the heads moving up and down the sheets - very funny. We also enjoyed the camel, and the policemen on scooters with flashing helmets.

Amateur groups have to work within the space that they are given and village halls are not always designed to facilitate theatre. I did wonder if any thought had been given to not having large flats, which acted as curtains and just letting the audiences see very slick scene changes?

The opening scene of Old Peking was well portrayed, (and the Chinese lanterns at the front of the stage were effective) although the village scene seemed to be there the whole way through the production. We did wonder if the Group had given any consideration to putting the flats on platforms which could be turned round to display various scenes? The drawing of gold coloured curtains across the back of the set to portray the palace would have worked better if they had been drawn across more carefully, without leaving a gap. In Widow Twankey's laundry, unfortunately we could see Nobby the Panda coming out of the back of the washing machine because the curtain put there moved - maybe a door might have been better. Wishee-Washee had quite a strong arm when throwing a sweet and they did tend to sting when they hit you!

There were some good costumes on display and it was nice to have the live musical keyboard accompaniment.

Overall I felt the show lacked a little pace and was let down by the technical side (scene changes and attention to detail) rather than the acting and singing but the audience loved it.

Mike Lacey

# DIDCOT PHOENIX

## Jack in the Beanstalk

The show opened with the Stepping Time dancers and one could see the determination and concentration on their faces. Good job! They really looked like they were enjoying what they were doing.



Set in the village of Soggy Bottom, which the very colourful and impressive scenery and signpost (loved the brickwork matching the wall behind) displayed to good effect. The use of a length of flue lining with leaves wrapped round it worked as the Beanstalk very well. Smoothly operated too. The Giant's kitchen set was again well done but it was such a shame that some sort of covering was not put over the beer crate to make it look like a cushion or something.

The costumes and make up generally communicated characters successfully to the audience although I did wonder about the costume used by the squire. It seemed a little too modern considering the more traditional pantomime costumes were being worn by most of the other cast members. One of the chorus stood out as she had on a shorter skirt and waistcoat which was shame as all the others looked great. The old lady, who later became the Princess, did not appear to fit in with the rest of the show at all. Please tie actor's hair back! The audience must never have seen the Princesses face, such a pity. When she appeared, she had just a cloak wrapped around her and a lot of the time we did see the very modern black dress under it. Then when she appeared later she wore just the black dress which was very inappropriate.

The lighting was very affective and the twinkling of the stars above the stage was really nice to see.

There was an excellent performance from Squire (Keith Norman) whose facial expressions reminded me of Albert Steptoe (watch out when wearing hats that the brim does not cause a shadow across the face) Fetch (Ruby Norton) and Carry (Soozy Smith) work well together and lit up the show with their energy and commitment. Very well done.

For me the highlight of the show was the entrance of Hugh Mungas ( Dan Shipman-Toon) walking onto the stage with stilts. The Didcot stage is very high compared to many village and school halls so it was wonderful to see him appear from the wings to the full height effect. Brilliant! I wonder at times that when actors have a microphone that they depend on it to create the volume and clarity needed. This is not the case....performers still have to act and project their voices in order to create the right atmosphere and mood of what they are talking about - the mic cannot do that. There did seem to be very little projection and at times it was even difficult to hear the actors.

There were many young actors on the stage dressed as mice and cats which is lovely to see but all aspects of a show need direction and discipline. It was a pity that the constant moving of mice across stage was distracting and

at one time one of the mice was either stood on or not seen by the Dame.

This was the first night and that might have been why some first night nerves showed in the lack of pace and slow cues. A few were searching for their words too but I am sure that by the second night all was much better and slicker. Otherwise the audience seemed to enjoy themselves and were quick to join in and give the usual "Panto" retorts to the baddie. I am sure the Panto went from strength as the weekend progressed and the usual very high quality that Didcot always produces came through.

Mike Lacey

## KINGSTON BAGPUIZE DRAMA GROUP



### Cinderella

by Stuart Paterson

This certainly was a different take on the traditional pantomime. The settings were imaginative with atmospheric

lighting, using slick scene changes with ingenious use of the auditorium. The costumes and make-up were good.

The ugly sisters (Emily Eastham & Kate Belcher) gave excellent performances and were comedic and evil in their dealings with Cinderella (Rebecca Bellis) and their manipulative ways with their mother (Paula Eastwood), opposing the wishes of their step father (Mike Lacey). Callum (Ruby Belcher) ably supported the beleaguered Cinderella and turned out to be her 'Prince', held captive in the castle. Prince Rufus (Fiona Eaton) and his mother the Queen (Delyth Hallion-Gammon) were equally charmed by Cinderella's transformation for the Royal Balls, with the help of a 'Magic Tree' and, of course, a Fairy Godmother (Mary-Elizabeth Shewry)

There were many additional characters who played their parts well, but special mention must be made of the brilliant performance of Sara Phoenix, who stepped into the role of Sgt Puff at the last minute. Douglas the dog (Ben Young) was a firm favourite with the audience and particularly the children for 'weeing in the cake mix!' The special moment was Douglas' return after everyone thought he had been killed for living in secret, in the kitchen. The Dancing Bear (Abby Hallion-Gammon) - danced delightfully, - where did that come from in Cinderella?(!)

It was strange, but effective not having the performance punctuated with pop songs, in fact the only music was for the dancing scenes, but it worked well.

This was a good interpretation of this new version of the traditional tale and was thoroughly enjoyed by all, including small children who picked up on a lot of the subtle and some not-so-subtle points.

Congratulations to all

Nigel James

# SINODUN PLAYERS

## The Pied Piper

by Anthony Jay and Jonathan Lynn



A lovely warm welcome from SP's Front of House and a full house for this first night.

Sadly we could not hear the off-stage prologue for the excited babble of the audience but the curtain soon opened to a beautifully painted Town Square and three songs in quick succession. Most of the chorus knew the steps except the lone male (why not sit him on a stool with a squeezebox?) Maybe it was first night nerves but the chorus lacked the attack we hope for - they should be taught to 'sock it' to the audience.

Zoe Neilsen made a nice, thigh-slapping Hans and Natasha Cornell, her sweet, if soft spoken, Heidi. Their duet, with nice harmonies, was slightly marred by a static chorus behind them.

Another beautifully painted Pig Farm backdrop and Dame Helga (Peter Smithson) playing foil to Fiona Huntingford-Ledger as her son Willie. Fiona has a lovely sense of timing and ease with an audience. She has made these parts her own. Pity Fiona didn't do a few real Irish Jig steps to the music - especially with the reference to Michael Flatley.

Will Lidbetter as black faced, top hatted King Rat was good but had poor choreography to 'Rat Trap'. Rebecca Cleverley and Mark Wilkin were excellent as the comedy rat-catchers, managing some very tricky rap dialogue.

Barbara Wood was a sparkly Good Fairy and Erica Harley a glamorous Evil Witch. Keith Yapp as the Burgomeister slowed the pace, I thought he had forgotten his lines but this was the first night after all.

Beautiful flute playing by Sue Huntingford-Ledger as the Pied Piper although I would have liked a little more enthusiasm in her acting. Also the script seemed to say that the rats, and subsequently the children, 'skipped and ran' after the Piper. whereas these rats and children walked sedately after him.

14 people are to be congratulated on the beautifully painted scenery and 17 people headed as usual by Jan Castle, made some lovely costumes. Hans and Heidi showing what a Principal Boy and girl should look like in the Finale Wedding outfit (Oxford Playhouse take note)

I wonder whether Lighting Designer, Oliver Hemming, decided not to use the usual Strobe lights for the chase as it can upset some people. The flashing lights didn't give the same flickering effect therefore the 'chase' should

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have had properly worked out moves. No UV light sequence this time - always such a magical effect and no ghost scene. No choreographer is named in the programme. I think it is a mistake not to use an experienced dance/movement Director 'Shiny Happy People' at the end needed movement direction

These are all niggles which could have made a good production Great.

Deidre Jones

# THE STONESFIELD PLAYERS

## Snow White

by Norman Robbins



A lovely Fairy Thistledown (Sandy Hayes) took us to the Land of Fairy Tale.

17 youngsters bounced and tumbled round the stage for a lively 'Dancing in the Street' in the City Square. Andy Tacon made a rather quiet Lord Chamberlain with nice participation from the villagers. Dame Goodheart (Steve Searle) shared lots of corny gags with Court Jester, (Lucy Martin). Prince Michael (Katy Saville) - in short, black, shiny hot-pants, which would have been enhanced with long black boots - sweetly sings 'A whole new world' duet with Snow White (Emma Saville). Snow White looked as though she had stepped out of a Disney poster.

The Ballroom had impressive pillars behind the villagers as they danced a nice minuet style dance to lovely music.

The Evil Queen (Helen Cannons) wearing a really nice purple shot silk dress and cape had good delivery. A sound, confident performance. The Mirror looked magical with a moving face and the echoing voice of Anton Lesser.

Nice use of front cloth while scenery was being changed behind. The Dame sang 'You're the one that I want' to the jester with good, fun movements. A magical UV scene which the children loved. There was a short but well-rehearsed sword fight between the Evil Queen and Prince Michael which led to 'Celebration' time in the City Square and the Finale. There were some nice choices of music for this pantomime and yet another full-house really enjoyed this production.

Deidre

**HANNEY DRAMA GROUP  
AND DOMINO PLAYERS  
Comedies of Errors**

**Two comedies showing the art of coarse acting**

**'Alright on the Night'** by Robin Wilson,

presented by Hanney Drama Group

The play starts at the Dress Rehearsal - the first actor to 'forget' his lines shouts 'Oh yes I forgot' when given his cue.

The 'director' of this play within a play, Mavis, is played by Sue Wise, as a real 'Diva'. Mavis is 'sure she can hear a wood pigeon' - cue no sound - this running gag keeps the audience laughing throughout. The 'caretaker' in brown overalls played by Charlie East, noisily and grumpily moves chairs and furniture on set making it plain that it's 'not his job'

As (real) Director, Jean Sutherland wrote in the programme 'The scene is the Dress Rehearsal of the Downton Players in their Village Hall. Needless to say we do not hold Dress Rehearsals like this'

A good fun 1 Act Play enjoyed by all

During the interval we were all treated to cheese and biscuits, a nice touch. The second play was:

**'Pride at Southanger Park'** by Rupert Bean.

Presented by The Domino Players

A wobbly opening curtain accompanied by lovely, though too loud music, the actors have to shout to make themselves heard.

An 'usherette' noisily asks a member of the audience for her ticket while waving her torch around and spoiling any lighting effect. This is a Georgian setting, nice costumes and chairs.

First missed cue heralded a long wait for the doorbell, a late entrance (actors on stage anxiously wondering what to do next) and then the actor enters, from the other side of the stage.

Gladys, the maid, waves happily at a relative in the audience. The priest reads his part from his large 'Bible' The usherette thinks one of the silences mean the interval had arrived and loudly shouts Ice Creams - too soon !! Lady Fanny Bottomley (Beryl Leeds) does a lovely comic slow faint, finishing somehow on all fours and Marcus D'Angelo (Bill Jestico) seemed to have black sideburns below his blond wig.

As (real) Director Margaret Batemen said in the programme, 'Pride and Prejudice' this is not. Please don't throw things they're doing their best.

The two plays were followed by a super skit:

**'The Old Spice Girls'**, which finished the evening off nicely.

What a good idea to get two Groups together to present a happy, entertaining evening for all concerned.

Deidre



**STANTON HARCOURT  
DRAMA GROUP**

**Aladdin**

by Ben Crocker

adapted by  
Steve Tuck



Nicely painted scenery and real good use of a painted backcloth which was

speedily pulled from Stage L to R to change scenes. Large flats at either side were reversed to change from China to Egypt - again beautifully painted - the programme says 'by cast'.

Laurence Tuck was a perfect Abanazar, we could hear every word he said and really believed in him as a true baddie. He was accompanied by a Parrot called Poly-Ester (Seb Rich) not sure why a parrot but a lovely costume and really good parrot mannerisms and squawk talk. Nic Robinson, the Genie, had a great costume but I would have liked a bit more authority in his posture, a straight back works wonders. Four 'ABBA-Nasties' sang 'Money, Money, Money with lots of teenage aggression. Aladdin, Molly Smith, was a little underplayed and spoke a little too fast for us to catch all her words. She had a nice duet with Princess Jasmine, Christy Smith.

Two funny policemen, Caroline Wheatley and Reg Berry, failed to keep order even with flashing 'nee nah' red lights on their helmets.

Simon Bustany as Wishee Washee had the audience in the palm of his hand and Mike Moran as Widow Twankey could be a stand-up comic with his really good timing.

Lucy Heath gave a strong, commanding interpretation of the Emperor.

Director and Producer, Steve Tuck has worked wonders on this small stage, adding local gags and adapting Ben Crocker's script. This was much appreciated by the enthusiastic villagers who were eager to take part in 'their' village pantomime.

Deidre Jones

**MIDDLE BARTON DRAMA GROUP**

**L'Escargot**

**A Pantomime by  
Martin Roberts**

After an amusing introduction by "Arfer Crown" (Micheal Horwood-Smith) the first scene opened on a dockside and the SS Salty Dog, to a



good rousing chorus by most of the cast. We were then introduced to the crew - Capt Pirate (Pronounced Pie-Rah-Tay) of Penzance (Dave Jackson)! Bill Stickers (Mike Herbert), Bob Downe (Jeff Brown) and a young Lew Locke (Edward Roberts-Grant).

Dame Eva Sigh the ship's cook then made her entrance played brilliantly by John Umney and his natural banter with the audience. He/She had an impressive range of costumes during the evening as befits a good panto dame. Her attempted rendition of "I want to sing in Opera" was an absolute hoot. The final crew member was Simon Pyman reliably played by Emma Droy.

We then met Lorna Green looking for acting work, well played by Sharon Roberts-Grant, good accents, switching between cockney & French all the way through. She was helped by 4 kids Lucy, Hannah, Henry & Will played by Lucy, Hannah, Henry & William (a wise move) looking sufficiently dirty. They managed to stow away on the ship - presumably so they could appear in the rest of the panto in France.

The villain of the piece Jacque Le Noir brilliantly played by Ken Lusted then set out the sinister side of the plot. He had an excellent French accent, which he held throughout the panto (unlike his beard!) and sung an excellent song.

The plot then took us to meet Juliette Romero (Destiny Gill) and Henrietta Barton nicely played by Verity Roberts. I felt Destiny could do with much more guidance from the director with her lines, but she looked good and otherwise moved well.

Eventually we were taken to Paris via various lovely painted backcloths to the house of Mr Romero, who we never actually met. The housekeeper Anna Tartique was well played by Karen Brown - good French accent. She later read a letter from her aged mother, which was full of funny jokes.

Finally when the plot was worked out, the villains were exposed and Mr Romero was rescued (even though we don't see him!) the crew decide to go to the Folies Begere hosted by Madame Gai (Lynda Webb). Just as we think the only Can-Can dancing we'll see is the men's hilarious attempts, the 2 girls (Lucy & Hannah) appear and give us a rousing Can-Can finish to a fun filled evening.

The whole evening was filled with witty & corny jokes from various members of the cast, One or two jokes were lost as the punch-lines were spoken far too quickly, particularly from the younger actors, but there were plenty more to keep us laughing all the way through, with many references to the Middle Barton Bus, much to the amusement of the locals (that's what village panto is all about!).

Costumes were excellent, especially the dame (they seemed to get more outrageous as the evening progressed) - thanks to Pat Scott.

The music was well chosen and ably played by Martin Ruck (he even managed to play an accordion without squeezing it).

Backcloths were all delightful, quite a few (I lost count!) - well done Denise Roberts.

I also loved the cartoon images on the publicity, very eye catching and actually made me want to go & see it. (I spent ages trying to work out which cartoon character represented which cast member)

All told, a thoroughly good evening's entertainment.

Thank you Middle Barton Drama Group

Mike Davies

## LAUNTON VILLAGE PLAYERS

### Jack and Jill and the Beanstalk

by Rod Fine

Nice 'freezes' from at least 40 villagers on stage as Fairy Tinkerbell (Nicky Roberts) sets the scene - no-one else on stage can see her. Happy opening song, simple choreography but very well drilled. All in front of brightly painted scenery. Dame Pennywise (Marcus Lamb) mother of Jack (Scott Houston) and Jill (Daisy May Richards) travel to find their cow. Good chorus work and harmonies behind Bessie the very cute dancing cow (Jackie Webber). Three nice 'veg' behind a bush from where we see the beanstalk grow. Good mud 'face pack' for Mrs Moneybags (Lesley Watson-Burn) when she comes to re-possess the farm. Good audience participation for the 'Ghost of Pennywise Farm using Glo sticks.

A rather complicated 'Community Song'.

As Jack chops down the Beanstalk stars and gold coins rain down and a happy, full stage sing 'Bessie has been Found'

A capacity audience loved their village Pantomime.

Deidre

## BREAKALEG PRODUCTIONS

### Hedda Gabler

by Henrik Ibsen



Amongst those I know who saw this production are at least three highly critical types. But it's fair to say we were all impressed, and

sometimes verged on the gobsmacked. Here is the unlikeliest of amateur theatre choices: a thorny, borderline unpalatable socio-feminist critique which can hardly be 'box office' and from which many would run a mile at high speed. But it is also, beyond any peradventure, a 24 carat masterpiece of world theatre. So hats off to Breakaleg for taking it on and causing all their audiences, I bet, to think furiously during and after the show.

Then one noticed that someone had thought about the music and the cosies; and that Mike Davies had crafted a credible and functional set for the tricky space that is the Unicorn. And that the cast - to whom it all comes down in the end - had all found a way into their character as well as exuding a total commitment to the play. One relaxed within a few minutes, because they were confident, swift and well-rehearsed. Viv Beckett was strong and unflinching as Hedda - I was tooting for her throughout; Rebecca Cleverley touching and truthful as Mrs. Elvsted; and (my personal fave, if truth be told) Jim Cotterell horribly convincing as that crashing bore of a good egg, George Tesman.

An enviable achievement all round - well done.

Chris Harris.



# FORTHCOMING EVENTS

## JIGSAW STAGE PRODUCTIONS

### Made in Dagenham The Musical



Inspired by a true story and based on a hit movie, this is an uplifting new British musical comedy about friendship, love and the importance of fighting for what is right.

Funny, touching and timeless, Made in Dagenham shows how ordinary people can do extraordinary things when they stand together. Expect energy and humour by the bucket load from the talented and vibrant cast.

Contains some strong language

**When:** 5-8 April 2017 at 7.30pm + 2.30pm Sat

**Where:** 'The Beacon', Wantage

**Tickets;** from The Beacon or Tel 01235 767509

**AND**

**When:** 20-22 April at 7.45pm + 2.30pm Sat

**Where:** 'The Cornerstone', Didcot

**Tickets:** Cornerstone, Box Office 01235 515144

## AMEGOS THEATRE

### Sweeney Todd;

The Demon Barber  
of Fleet Street

Stephen  
Sondheim's  
award-winning,  
macabre musical

Sweeney Todd is the story of a man who has been the victim of a miscarriage of justice and is returning to London to have vengeance on those who have done him wrong. He meets up with Mrs Lovett, who uses her pie shop to become Sweeney's partner in crime and together they set out for revenge, without a care for anyone who gets in their way.

Amazing chorus numbers and heart-rending songs feature in this fabulous musical..... Come on, Come on, Sweeney's waiting!

*"As comic as it is dark, you'll never forget Sweeney"*

**When:** 5th - 8th April.

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



ODN website: [www.OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org](http://www.OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org)

## ST PETER'S PLAYERS

### "A Bad Dream"

by Simon Brett

Between June and November 1902, the year of the Coronation of Edward VII, Bellingford Amateur Dramatics Society is rehearsing A Midsummer Night's Dream. It has the usual range of different personalities - stalwart group members, young lads about town, daughters of local businessmen and also the

wealthy diamond-trade man, a devotee of Henry Irving, who is underwriting the production. This man's murder, set against Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, the new craze of ping-pong and the invention of finger-printing broadens the plot and develops the characters. Commissioned to commemorate Sutton Amateur Dramatic Club centenary in 2002.

**When:** 5 - 8 April 2017 - 7:30pm

**Where:** Wolvercote Village Hall

**Tickets:** £9, £6, available from the Post Box, Lower Wolvercote or phone 01865 556120 or 01865 516054

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



## MUSICAL YOUTH COMPANY OF OXFORD

### "The Hired Man"

by Melvyn Bragg

Dubbed "The British Les Mis" by the press, The Hired Man is an epic British musical about love, labour and loss. The show



features a succession of soaring choruses and rousing foot-stomping rhythms and was voted 'Best Musical of the Year' by Time Out, The Guardian and The Stage during its West End run in 1984. Based on Melvyn Bragg's stirring novel, The Hired Man is an intimate portrayal of a tight-knit rural community tested by the challenges of colliery life and heartache of the Great War.

MYCO's last show at Headington sold out weeks in advance so book early to avoid disappointment.

*"a triumph: a finessed and highly professional show"*  
Daily Info, 'Les Mis' at Headington, 2015

**Where:** THE THEATRE at HEADINGTON  
Headington School, Headington Road, Oxford OX3 7TD

**When:** Tue 11th – Sat 15th April  
7.30pm and Sat mat 2.30pm

**Tickets** £15 - £21 via the online box office.  
Concessions & Group rates available.

## ABINGDON OPERATIC SOCIETY

### “Annie” The Musical

by Charles Strouse, Martin Charnin, & Thomas Meehan

Annie is the heart-warming story of a girl, her dog, and the big wide world. The show premiered on Broadway in 1977 and ran for a record-breaking six years. In London it opened in 1978 and ran for 1,485 performances.



Best known is the song ‘Tomorrow’ from Annie, but it also features fantastic musical numbers such as ‘It’s the Hard Knock Life’, ‘Little Girls’, ‘Easy Street’, and ‘I Don’t Need Anything But You’.

**When:** 18 to 22 April 7.30pm and 2.30pm Saturday matinee.

**Where:** Amey Theatre, Abingdon School, Park Road, Abingdon

**Tickets:** see [www.AbingdonOperatic.co.uk](http://www.AbingdonOperatic.co.uk)

## BANBURY CROSS PLAYERS

### The Tempest

by William Shakespeare

Prospero, usurped Duke of Milan, rules a distant island by use of magic. Fortune brings his enemies close and he spies an opportunity for revenge, raising up a storm to shipwreck them.

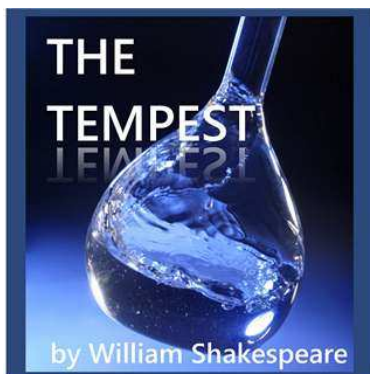
The shipwrecked travellers are separated and an invisible spirit, Ariel, directs their wandering. As Prospero's plans draw to a climax, will he abandon his magic for the sake of his daughter and Dukedom?

Shakespeare's final play – a turbulent mix of storm, shipwreck, lost and found love, heartache, revenge and reconciliation.

**When:** 26-29 April 2017, 7.45pm

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

**Tickets** £ 11/£ 10 (no concessions Fri/Sat) from [www.themillartscentre.co.uk](http://www.themillartscentre.co.uk) or the Box Office 01295 279002



## THE WYCHWOOD PLAYERS

### The Vicar of Dibley

adapted by Ian Gower and Paul Carpenter

from the original TV series by Richard Curtis and Paul Mayhew-Archer



The Vicar of Dibley

Although only running to two series and ten ‘specials’ the TV series of ‘The Vicar of Dibley’ has been warmly taken to the nation’s heart and sunk into our folk memories.

We only have to hear the stuttered, “NO, no, no, no....Yes” and we are immediately taken back to those happy family evenings around the television when we laughed uproariously at the way Jim Trott’s hesitations caused David Horton such irritation as he tried to chair the Dibley Parish Council.

**When:** Thursday 27th April to Saturday 29th April

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

**Tickets:** [wychwoodplayersboxoffice@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:wychwoodplayersboxoffice@yahoo.co.uk)  
Tel: 07817 426305

## KINGSTON BAGPUIZE

### DRAMA GROUP

#### An evening of comedy & drama

##### Henna Night

Heartbroken Judith has left a

HENNA NIGHT  
By Amy Rosenthal



voicemail for her ex-boyfriend in the hope that it will bring him back. To her horror, however, it’s his new girlfriend Ros who turns up at her door, determined to iron this out once and for all. So begins an evening of raw emotion, black comedy and sizzling debate, as two very different women fight for their right to happiness and love. (This play is not suitable for children.)

##### The Extraordinary Revelations of Orca the Goldfish

For Henry Smith, actor, comedian, sporting hero, leading socialite, business tycoon,

The Extraordinary Revelations of Orca the Goldfish  
By David Tristram



secret agent, Casanova and acting President of the United States, life was rarely dull. For Alice Smith, a housewife, life was rarely anything else. Enter Michel, French waiter. Exactly what happens next no-one is quite sure, except that it involves a melon, a deckchair and a bottle of neck rub. Fantasy blurs into reality. Secret passions explode. Two worlds which seemed a million miles apart are suddenly on a collision course and only their pet goldfish Orca and you will ever know the true story. It could only happen to Henry and Alice and a Goldfish.

## The Real Problem

When Desdemona, Juliet, Katherine, Anne Boleyn and Hecate get together there is only one topic; they talk about men and the problems they cause. This light-hearted comedy is acted out by the youth members of the group.

**When:** 27-29 April at 7.30pm

**Where:** Southmoor Village Hall, Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor; Tickets: £9 each (under 18s £6) from 01865 821816 or via

**website:** [www.kbdgshow.com](http://www.kbdgshow.com).



## THAME PLAYERS

### Absent Friends

by Alan Ayckbourn

When Colin, who has been absent, comes back to his circle of friends, they are worried about how to approach him over the death of his fiancée. Diana organises a tea party for Colin's arrival.

There are tensions between his friends even though they are trying to appear friendly towards him. However, Colin seems euphorically happy while the rest of the party are near breaking point.

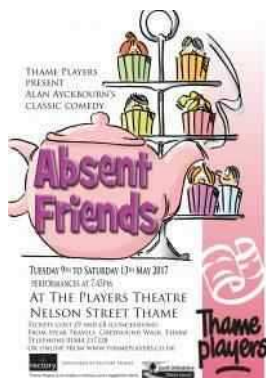
**When:** 9 - 13 May - 7:45pm

**Where:** The Players Theatre, Nelson St, Thame.

**Tickets:** £9 (concs £8). Tuesday all seats £7

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

or from Spear Travels on 01844 217228



## FARINGDON DRAMAMATIC SOCIETY

### My Friend Miss Flint

By Donald Churchill & Peter Yeldham

When Tom Lambert, botanist and TV gardening personality, receives a call from Inland Revenue enquiring about his public relations consultant Joanna Flint, he can honestly say he has never heard of her. By lunchtime, he knows all about Miss Flint: his accountant, who is also his ex-wife, confesses that she invented Miss Flint as a tax dodge. This tricky situation sets the stage for sparkling comedy.

**When:** 10 - 13 May - 7:30pm

**Where:** Buscot Park Theatre.

**Tickets:** £10 inc glass of wine from The Gifted Magpie, London St

or online: [www.faringdondramatic.org.uk](http://www.faringdondramatic.org.uk)



## WSMC Magical Musicals

WSMC is delighted to present "Magical Musicals" a concert celebrating the fantastic songs from the Musicals. The night will feature hits from well-known musicals such as Grease, Chicago,

The Sound of Music and Blood Brothers. As well as family favourites like The Jungle Book and The Little Mermaid and more modern shows including The Commitments, American Idiot and Rock of Ages.

Don't miss out. Book your tickets now to see this amazing show.

**Dates/venues:**

Friday 12 May - Old Mill Hall, Grove  
Saturday 13 May - East Hagbourne Village Hall  
Friday 19 May - Steventon Village Hall  
Saturday 20 May - Old Mill Hall, Grove

Show starts: 7:30pm (doors & bar open at 7pm)

**Tickets:** £9 (£7 concessions)

Available from:

Bretts Chemist, Grove;  
East Hagbourne Post Office,  
Steventon Post Office

or online at: [www.WSMC-Music.co.uk](http://www.WSMC-Music.co.uk)



## BARTHOLOMEW PLAYERS

### "Humble Boy"

by Charlotte Jones

From the author of the current TV series "The Halcyon", comes this tale of dysfunctional families, reversed social hierarchy and humility set in the idyllic Cotswold Countryside. This play is inspired by Hamlet where Felix Humble returns home after learning of the death of his father, to find his mother about to marry the completely unsuitable George Pye. The ensuing

revelations about a daughter Felix knew nothing about and his own mental difficulties in maintaining his familial and professional responsibilities will illicit laughter, tears and empathy in those watching this play.



As usual, we are partnering with a local group for our Charity Supper Show – this time Bike Safe: B4044 Eynsham to Botley Community Path will assist us in the organisation in return for a share of the profits from the evening. We look forward to seeing you!

**When:** Wed 17th, to Sat 20th May

Doors open: 7.00pm, Performance: 7.30pm

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

**Tickets:** for Wed, Thurs and Sat nights £9.00 (conc £8.00)

from Denise Santilli, 07721 744020, bart.players@gmail.com,

**ONLINE** from

www.ticketsource.co.uk/bartholomewplayers or from Evenlode DIY in Eynsham or on the door

**Tickets:** for **FRIDAY** 19th May – must be purchased in advance by 14th May

Doors open: 6.00pm, Food served: 6.30pm – 7.30pm, Performance: 7.30pm

Advance Tickets only: £18.00

from Denise Santilli, 07721 744020, or bart.players@gmail.com (not available online)

**Website:** www.bartholomewplayers.co.uk

## SINODUN PLAYERS

### Return to the Forbidden Planet

By Bob Carlton

This thrilling and energetic sci-fi jukebox rock musical is loosely based on Shakespeare's The Tempest and the American B-movie Return to the Forbidden Planet. It features rock classics Shake, Rattle and Roll, Good Vibrations, Born to be Wild...and many, many more from the 1950s and the exhilarating world-changing 1960s. Ric Harley directs a truly spectacular and experienced cast who will be performing with a live band on stage.

**When:** Weds-Sat 17-20 May at 7.30pm with a Saturday matinee at 2.30pm

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

**Tickets:** £15 (under-18s £12 on Weds, Thurs evenings and Saturday matinee) from www.cornexchange.org.uk or box office 01491 825000.



## OXFORD OPERATIC SOCIETY

### Avenue Q

by Charlotte Jones



Avenue Q is a laugh-out-loud musical that follows the story of a recent college graduate named Princeton who moves into a shabby New York apartment all the way out on Avenue Q.

There, he meets Kate (the girl next door), Rod (the Republican), Trekkie (the internet sexpert), Lucy The Slut and other vibrant types who help Princeton finally discover his true purpose in life! This hilarious production is a coming of age tale which addresses the anxieties associated with entering adulthood. With live puppets, a memorable musical score and relatable themes, this contemporary musical will leave you in stitches!

This production is a small cast musical brought to you by Oxford's Operatic Society, which specialise in Musical Theatre.

Avenue Q has adult themes including strong language, sexual content and puppet nudity.

The age guidelines are 14+ for this production (but parents should use their own discretion).

**When:** Wed 31<sup>st</sup> May - Sat 3<sup>rd</sup> Jun at 7.30pm

**Where:** Theatre at Headington, Headington Road, Oxford, OX3 7TD

**Tickets:** can be purchased through Ticket Oxford:-

www.ticketsoxford.com/whats-on/all-shows/avenue-q/4658

# ODN Drama Festival

Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon.



2 one act plays per evening Mon-Fri, 3 plays called back for Saturday Gala night. Our adjudicator for 2017 is Jennifer Scott-Reid, a GODA member. 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.

A rare feature of the ODN drama festival is that after each adjudication, the adjudicator runs a short workshop with the cast!

At the end of the Friday night performances & workshops, the adjudicator will announce her choice of 3 plays to be repeated on the Saturday Gala night.

**When:** Mon 5th June - Sat 10th June 2017

**Where:** Unicorn Theatre, Checker Walk, Abingdon

**Tickets:** will be on sale at the Bookstore in the precinct Abingdon nearer the time, or 01235 821351

DORCHESTER A.D.S.

## Agatha Crusty and the Village Hall Murders

By Derek Webb

Multiple Murders in  
Dorchester on  
Thames Village Hall!

Hot on the heels of  
Dame Agatha  
Christie's 125th  
anniversary,  
Dorchester Amateur  
Dramatics Society

(DADS) next production is Derek Webb's affectionate tribute: 'Agatha Crusty and the Village Hall Murders'.

Fans of Agatha Christie, who lived locally at Winterbrook near Wallingford, will recognise many key elements from her 66 detective novels, including multiple murders and suspects. However, DADS Director, Sue Kitson says that, "This comedy whodunit succeeds because the central character, Miss Crusty, a famous crime writer, is not a slavish reworking of Miss Marple or, indeed, Agatha Christie herself."

DADS regular, Christine Jones is playing Agatha Crusty who has gone to visit her cousin for a "peaceful" break in a country village. But it is not long before she is called upon to use her expertise to aid the very incompetent D. I. Twigg (Mark Williams) to solve a series of dastardly murders, seemingly all connected to the Village Hall.

There are many suspects including: Toby, the Vicar (Mark Wilkin); Eleanor, Chair of the Committee (Rosemary Mills); Harry the Caretaker (Ian Brace) and identical twins Olivia and Oliver Truscott-Pratt (both played by Rachel Winslet-Morris). Natasha Cornell is making her DADS debut in this production and observes, "It's great to join the cast of Agatha Crusty, everyone has been really welcoming and we've had a lot of fun during the rehearsals with so many witty puns and one-liners."

**When:** 21 - 24 June - 7:45pm

**Where:** Dorchester on Thames Village Hall.

**Tickets:** from [www.dads.org.uk](http://www.dads.org.uk).

