

Oxfordshire Drama Network



Newsletter

APRIL 2026

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Welcome to spring, the results of the Winter Festival, and the introduction of the new 40th Anniversary summer Festival.

We have a bumper edition this time, with plenty of ODN member's shows to go and see.



Mike Davies. (Next issue June, deadline 21st May)

WHAT'S ON DIARY (details inside)

APRIL

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| 15-18 Goring Gap Players | An Ideal Husband |
| 15-18 St Peter's Players | Absurdities |
| 23-25 Kingston Bagpuize DG | The Unfriend |
| 23-25 Compton Players | Cluedo |
| 23,25 Kidlington AOS | Messages Through Music |
| 30-2May Wychwood Players | The Unfriend |

MAY

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|-------------------------------|--|
| 5-9 Thame Players | Ladies In Lavender |
| 7-9 Chipping Norton (CHAOS) | Anything Goes |
| 12-19 Balancing Act | Spare Prick |
| 13-16 Bartholomew | A Murder is Announced |
| 16 & Jigsaw Stage Productions | |
| 30 | Wind in the Willows the Musical |

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|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 19-23 Sinodun Players | Murder, Margaret and Me |
| 20-23 HAODS (Henley) | Footloose |

JUNE

- | | |
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| 5-7 Aston (ACTS) | Noises Off |
| 11-13 Dorchester (DADS) | Calendar Girls |
| 12-15 Abingdon Drama Club | |
| 18-20 Banbury Cross Players | |
| | Underdog: The Other Other Brontë |

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CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Welcome to the new changes this year at ODN!

With grateful thanks to Karen Carey for chairing ODN for the last 6 years, but although Karen has now stepped down, she's immediately taken up the reins of ODN committee Secretary, alongside the remaining committee, including myself as new chairman, we also welcome three new committee members.

I'm Mandyrae Jessey and although I have a professional stage and theatre (plus TV and radio) background, for the past 25+ years I have been working voluntarily in amateur dramatics. I'm the founder and director of two groups, Wychwood Saplings and Branching Out Drama Society.

But enough about me!

It's about all of you, our amazing groups, that ODN want to help and encourage as the umbrella of Oxfordshire amateur dramatics. We would like to hear from you all, "how's it going?" What are the issues you/we all share? Thoughts on Workshops, festivals etc.

The funding into the arts, as we know, is in a terrible state, but drama groups like ours across the country are the lifeline to would-be actors, those who are resting and can't get work, to our young rising stars, our writers and all the amazing people who want to learn about the technology, costumes, make up and set design.

We also know how much the arts help mental health and the disabled, plus being a lifeline to many isolated and lonely individuals. We often become a big theatrical family. On the bad days when the ticket sales are low, grants are refused and all costs go up, please remember what an amazing job you are all doing, the community for the community, every professional was once an amateur and every amateur has a potential to be recognised!

Along with the ODN committee, I want to see if we can work together more, work on new ventures and move forward!

ODN is celebrating its 40th year as many of you know, with some exciting new plans, so let's all keep going and grab opportunities and experience and keep bringing live performances to Oxfordshire and beyond.

I'm excited to be working with you all and a massive thank you to the committee for their ongoing hard work and support.

Mandyrae Jessey - ODN Chairman.



Oxfordshire Drama Network

One Act Drama Festival

2 or 3 plays per night

Mon 1st to Wed 3rd June at 7.30pm

at the Unicorn Theatre, Checker Walk,
Abingdon, OX14 3HZ.

Awards presentation on the Last night.

Download an entry form to enter your play,
See article on our website.

Or email oxforddramanetwork@gmail.com

Full details are on the form.

N.B. Groups **must be paid up ODN members**

(joining details on 'Downloads' page of our website).

The Adjudicator will be Chris Baglin, a Member of GODA.



ODN 40th ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL

'A FESTIVAL WITHOUT WALLS'

EASTER – 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

AWARDS EVENING: 10th OCTOBER 2026

🎉 CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF THE ODN 🎉

For four decades, Oxfordshire Drama Network has championed amateur theatre across the county. In 2026, we're putting our member groups centre stage. This is more than a festival, it's a county-wide celebration of the creativity, dedication and talent that has kept Oxfordshire theatre thriving for 40 years. Let's make this anniversary year unforgettable.

✂️ WHAT CAN BE ENTERED?

If it's theatre, it belongs in our 40th Anniversary Festival. Any production staged between Easter and 30 September 2026 can be entered as part of the festival.

🌟 WHAT YOU'LL RECEIVE

Every entered production benefits from:-

A formal assessment by two ODN-nominated adjudicators.

Judging using the GoDA marking framework.

A full written review published in the ODN Newsletter.

Eligibility for a wide range of festival awards.



EXTRA PROMOTION FOR PARTICIPATING GROUPS

Entering the festival also means increased visibility for your society.

📱 SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

Your production will receive dedicated promotion across ODN social media platforms as part of the festival

📖 ONLINE FESTIVAL BROCHURE

All participating groups will be featured in our special 40th Anniversary Digital Festival Brochure

40TH ANNIVERSARY AWARDS EVENING

10th OCTOBER 2026 – Venue to be confirmed

All entries will be celebrated at our special Awards Evening, where we will present:

- Technical & design awards
- Original play awards
- Youth performance awards
- Musical & production awards
- Adjudicators' special awards
- And more...

ENTER NOW

Contact: oxforddramanetwork@gmail.com or

<https://support.google.com/drive/answer/6283888> for Google-Drive entry form

Entry Deadline: 1st May 2026 Entry fee: £15 N.B. Groups **must be paid up ODN members**

REVIEW

Sinodun Players The Unfriend

March 2026

Congratulations to the group on a highly polished, fast paced and hilarious production of Steven Moffat's The Unfriend. This is an extremely funny play with fast paced dialogue which Sinodun Players got every last ounce of fun from.

The theatre is warm and welcoming with a front of house crew that are both efficient and courteous. The 'watermarking' of the programmes was a nice touch.

The set was well designed to empower the players to make full use of the spacious stage. The lighting, sound and set for the opening scene, aboard a cruise liner, were well thought through to create an image of relaxed, sunny climes. The 'suburban house' set worked well to enhance the action without seeming cluttered. The lighting and, in particular, the sound not only supported but elevated the storytelling. The music was very well chosen to add to the atmosphere and lead us through mood changes.

Costumes and makeup supported the various character roles without being intrusive. The distinction between middle-aged, middle-class British, brash American and petulant teenager was obvious without being intrusive. The creative use of two large side screens was a clever touch, particularly for allowing the audience access to video Whatsapp calls and the front door security camera. I thought they worked less well when used for the ocean.

The acting was strong across the board. All roles were totally believable. The play was very well rehearsed. Lines flowed in a natural way giving the impression of a user-friendly family home in which the characters were completely at home with each other's foibles. The silences and pausing were managed to great affect and the empathy between members of the cast added to the overall cohesion of the production.

Julia Ashton underplayed the intrusive American to perfection. Her accent was good and consistent throughout as were her mannerism and general personae.

Drew Morris as Peter and Rebecca Lee as Debbie, successfully conveyed the image of a couple at the comfortable stage in their marriage. Their actions and timing were well managed, and their dialogue never forced. They used the space well and never lost contact with each other. The discussion of the impending visit was particularly well done – energetic without being frantic, movement up and down from the sofa seemed very natural and the mood changes and reactions to 'surprises' were perfect. His

confused husband and her rant were done to perfection.

Tommy Newland and Ellie Gerreard as the petulant teenagers did a fine job. Both had perfect timing on their entrances and managed the stairs well. Again, they were perfectly at home in their roles and with their interaction with the other actors. Very disciplined but relaxed performances.

Johnny Cornelious as the boring neighbour was hilarious. Again, the sense of timing and smooth interaction with other actors spoke of hard work and dedication.

Kevin Goodfellow as PC Junkin gave a confident and convincing performance. He made good use of the stage space. His facial reactions were hilarious; I really do not know how he kept a straight face with all the mayhem going on around him.

This was a very well-directed play. Every aspect of the production from introduction music to curtain call was thought through in detail. The director demonstrated excellent understanding of all aspects of the production and interpreted the text with depth and insight. The action flowed and the actors moved with ease from mood to mood demonstrating an excellent understanding of theatrical dynamics and motivation.

Congratulations again, all that hard work paid off. The audience thoroughly enjoyed this side-splittingly funny production.

Mareve Kilbride-Newman.

AUDITIONS

Drayton Players Bankers Gone Bananas

By Sue Hadley

We are looking for a banker/gangster for our comedy play in June 2026 (one act play/comedy part)
Age 30-70, Male or Female
We meet every Tues evening locally.



Let us know if you're interested in joining a fun drama group

Contact

Sue Hadley or Mike Davies
07961 287775 01235 834690

Scripts can be delivered

HadleyHadleySue@Yahoo.co.uk

HAODS – Henley

Actor needed:

We are still looking for someone to play Duncan Potter – Principle Private Secretary to the Prime Minister: Learning to be a sinical civil servant. Age 30's.



HAODS ONE ACT FESTIVAL PLAY ENTRY The Tussington Paradox

It seems we cannot get enough of crazy politics at the moment! Does the picture remind you of anything? This satirical play is based very loosely on real events.

We will be entering The Tussington Paradox in the Henley, Wallingford and Abingdon One Act Play Drama Festivals.

These are the dates I have requested at the various festivals:

Henley: Sat 9 May:

Abingdon: Fri 5 June:

Wallingford: Friday 12 Jun

Written & directed by Julie Huntington

Rehearsals Tuesday Thursday,

Some online rehearsals.

The HAODS Studio, New St, Henley. RG9 2B

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Goring Gap Players An Ideal Husband

by Oscar Wilde

This classic Wilde play centres on Sir Robert Chiltern, a prestigious member of the House of Commons, who has it all: money, influence and a beautiful wife. What could possibly go wrong?



The play opens with Sir Robert and his wife, Lady Gertrude Chiltern, hosting dinner with family members and friends, including Lord Goring, a dandified bachelor, and Sir Robert's sister, Mabel Chiltern.

Another member of the party is Mrs Cheveley who knows secrets from his past and threatens to expose him to public shame and bring an end to both his stellar political career and his blissful marriage.

When: Wed 15th to Sat 18th April 8pm (doors open 7.30pm)

Where: Goring Village Hall,

Tickets: £15 (£12.50 First Night) from <https://www.trybooking.com/uk/GAMQ>

Website: www.GoringGapPlayers.co.uk

St Peter's Players Absurdities

A double bill of absurd comedies.

Suppressed Desires

by George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell

First performed in 1914. It lampoons the 1910s obsession with psychoanalysis.

Forced psychoanalytic interpretations of dreams nearly destroy a marriage before the final realisation of the folly of obsession.

Epidemic

by Octave Mirbeau translated by Richard J. Hand. A tragic farce written by Octave Mirbeau in 1898 that serves as a biting satire of municipal politics and the selfishness of the elite.

Both these plays can be termed "antique" but they share alarming contemporary themes.

When: Wed 15th to Sat 18th April at 7.30pm

Where: Wolvercote Village Hall

Tickets: £11/£8 from

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/st-peter-s-players> or call 07398 270218



KBDG

The Unfriend by Stephen Moffatt

The Unfriend is a dark comedy that has recently successfully run in the West End. The plot centres on suburban couple Peter and Debbie, whose polite invitation to a stranger on holiday has hilarious consequences. Stephen Moffatt is well known for his TV writing on Sherlock and Dr Who.

Age guidance 13+

Fully licensed bar and teas/coffees available.

When: Thu 23 to Sat 25 April 7.30pm (doors open at 7pm)

Where: Southmoor Village Hall, Draycott Road, OX13 5BY

Tickets: Adult: £14 | Under 18s: £10

www.ticketsource.co.uk/kingston-bagpuize-drama-group



Compton Players

Cluedo

It's a dark and stormy night, and you've been invited to a very unusual dinner party. Each of the guests has an alias, the butler offers a variety of weapons, and the host is, well... dead. So whodunnit?



Join the iconic oddballs known as Scarlet, Plum, White, Green, Peacock, and Mustard as they race to find the murderer in Boddy Manor before the body count stacks up... Let the game begin.

When: Thu 23 to Sat 25 April at 7.30pm

Where: Compton Village Hall

Tickets: £12 (£10 conc) from:-

www.comptonplayers.co.uk

or email boxoffice@comptonplayers.co.uk

Kidlington

Amateur Operatic Society

Spring Concert: Messages Through Music

A new angle on popular songs from Purcell to The Carpenters, chosen and arranged by members of the Kidlington Amateur Operatic Society and performed in the idyllic backdrop of St. Mary's Church.

When: Thu 23rd & Saturday 25th April at 7.30pm

Where: St. Mary's Church, Church St, Kidlington OX5 2BA

Tickets: £15; aged 11-17 £10 from

www.ticketsource.co.uk/KidlingtonKaos



Wychwood Players

The Unfriend

by Steven Moffat.
A contemporary comedy

Peter and Debbie befriend Elsa: a lusty, Trump-loving widow from Denver, USA. She's less than woke but kind of wonderful. They agree to stay in touch. When Elsa invites herself to visit them, Peter and Debbie look her up online and too late, learn the truth about Elsa.



First performed at Chichester in 2022, it transferred to the West End in 2023.

Please note that this production contains adult themes and very strong language.

When: Thu 30th April to Sat 2nd May at 7.30pm.

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

Tickets: £12 from:

Website: www.wychwoodplayers.com

Thame Players Ladies In Lavender

by Shaun McKenna

An evocative, heart-warming story of unfulfilled dreams and unrequited love.

Based on the film screenplay by Charles Dance, and on the original short story by William J. Locke

Ladies In Lavender tells the tale of two sisters Ursula and Janet who live in a close-knit fishing village in picturesque Cornwall, in 1936.

When a handsome and talented young Polish violinist bound for America is washed ashore, the Widdington sisters take him under their wing and nurse him back to health. However, the presence of the mysterious young man disrupts their peaceful lives and the community in which they live.

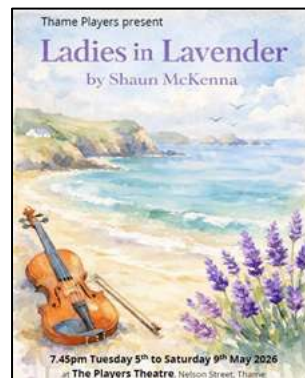
When: Tue 5th to Sat 9th May at 7:45pm

+ Sat Matinee at 2.30pm

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

Tickets: £10 to £12 from:

www.thameplayers.co.uk/events/ladies-in-lavender



Chipping Norton amateur theatre group (CHAOS) Anything Goes

by Cole
Porter

The classic musical show is famous for its lively dance routines, toe-tapping songs and brilliantly funny script.



Anything Goes is set aboard a transatlantic cruise ship and features songs including I Get a Kick Out of You, You're the Top and the title number, Anything Goes.

When: Thu May 7 to Sat May 9 at 7.30pm
+ Sat Matinee 2.30pm

Where: Chipping Norton Theatre.

Tickets: £19.50 from the theatre box office by calling 01608 642350 or

www.ChippingNortonTheatre.com/events/chaos-anything-goes

Balancing Act SPARE PRICK

By Joe Graham

The outrageously funny relationship comedy Love...the final frontier.

Well-meaning Star Trek geek, Frank tries to help best friend, Russ find love and avoid being the odd one after his recent marriage break-up. Problem is Frank's haphazard attempts to coach Russ in the ways of dating and moving on, also force him to examine his relationship with wife, Jo.

But Frank has a plan. Frank always has a plan and plans have to be implemented at the right time. But the clock is ticking and an unplanned chain of events triggered years ago could change everything.

The thing is there is always a plan, it just isn't always you making it!

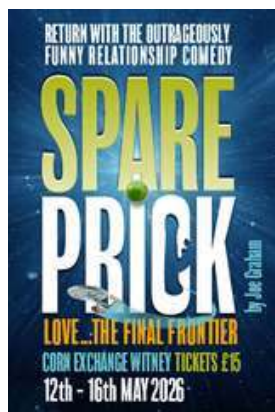
When: Tue 12th to Sat 16th May at 7.30pm

Where: Corn Exchange Witney

Tickets: £15 from:

www.ticketsource.co.uk/balancing-act

Website: <https://www.balancingact.org.uk>



Bartholomew Players A Murder is Announced

by Agatha Christie

Adapted for the stage
by Leslie Darbon

The plot begins with an unexpected notice in the local Chipping Cleghorn Gazette: "A murder is announced and will take place on Friday, October 29th, at Little Paddocks at 6:30 p.m."

What the neighbours assume is a playful game of "Murder Mystery" quickly turns into a deadly reality. Fortunately, Miss Marple is on hand to unravel a complex web of identities, motives, and secrets.

A Thriller for the Community to celebrate 50 years since Christie's death.

When: Wed 13th to Sat 16th May at 7.30pm
(doors open 7pm)

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

Tickets: £14 (no concessions) from:

www.trybooking.com/uk/FUXA or

from Denise Santilli, 07721 744020,

bart.players@gmail.com or

from Evenlode DIY in Eynsham or on the door

Website: www.bartholomewplayers.co.uk



Jigsaw Stage Productions Wind in the Willows the Musical.

A Musical version of The Wind in the Willows, based on the children's novel written by Kenneth Grahame in 1908. Book by Lewis Holifield, with music and lyrics by James Carter, this show promises to be a lot of fun for audiences and performers alike, full of brand new outstanding musical numbers.

Venues & Times:

The Beacon, Wantage Sat 16 May at 2.30 & 7.30pm.

Tickets: from: <https://www.trybooking.com/uk/GFGM>
and

Harwell Village Hall on 30 May at 2.30 & 7.30pm.

Tickets: from: <https://www.trybooking.com/uk/GFGN>



Sinodun Players

Murder, Margaret and Me

Agatha Christie and Margaret Rutherford should never have been friends. But they were. Their paths crossed when they found themselves at the heart of one of British cinema's most successful franchises. However, the Miss Marple films almost didn't get made...



Our production of Murder, Margaret and Me is one of the events being staged to mark the 50th anniversary of the death of Agatha Christie. It is a story of friendship, identity and the achievement of women in the long-lost world of the silver screen.

This amateur production of Murder, Margaret and Me is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd, on behalf of Samuel French Ltd.

When: Tue 19th to 23 May at

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

Tickets: from:

www.cornexchange.org.uk/whats-on/murder-margaret-and-me

HAODS (Henley)

Footloose

by Dean Pitchford & Tom Snow

Ren McCormack, a city teenager from Chicago who moves to the conservative town of Bomont. He is shocked to find that the local Reverend Shaw Moore has banned dancing following a tragic accident. As Ren battles the local authorities to bring back the prom, he forms a bond with the Reverend's rebellious daughter, Ariel.



It features a mix of Oscar-nominated 80s hits and original songs, including: "Footloose", "Holding Out for a Hero", "Let's Hear It for the Boy" & "Almost Paradise".

When: Wed 20 to Sat 23 May at 7.45pm + Matinee Sat 2.30pm

Where: Kenton Theatre, Henley-on-Thames

Tickets: £25 (£24, £16) www.TheKenton.org.uk

ACTS

Noises Off

by Michael Frayn

Called the funniest farce ever written,

Noises Off presents a manic menagerie of itinerant actors rehearsing a flop called "Noises On". With slamming doors, on and off intrigue and sardines figuring in the plot, Andy Ball swaps Aston Repair Depot for the role of Director and the cast try his patience!

This hilarious farce has been performed around the world since 1982.

Bar & Raffle (cash only)

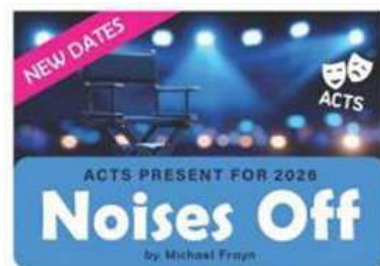
When: Fri 5th & Sat 6th June at 7:30pm
+ Sunday 7th June at 2:30pm

Where: Aston Village Hall, OX18 2FS

Tickets: £10 from

Aston Repair Depot (cash only) or

PoppHoskins@gmail.com or 07806 737954



Dorchester A.D.S.

Calendar Girls

a comedy
by Tim Firth

When Annie's husband John dies of leukaemia, she and best friend Chris resolve to raise

money for a new settee in the local hospital waiting room. They manage to persuade some fellow WI members to pose nude with them for an "alternative" calendar, with a little help from hospital porter and amateur photographer Lawrence. The news of the women's charitable venture spreads like wildfire, and hordes of press soon descend on the small village of Knapeley in the Yorkshire Dales. The calendar is a success, but Chris and Annie's friendship is put to the test under the strain of their new-found fame.

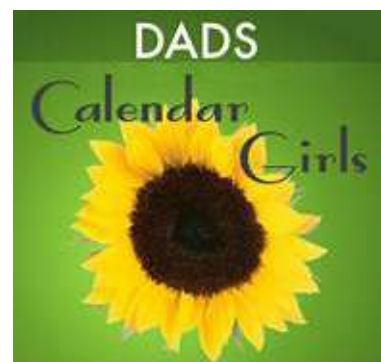
A hilarious, heart-warming comedy about friendship & courage.

When: Thu 11th to Sat 13th June at 7.30pm.

Where: Dorchester-on-Thames Village Hall,
Dorchester-on-Thames OX10 7HR.

Tickets: Early-Bird to 30th April £12.50,
then £14 all seats.

from: www.ticketsource.co.uk/dads



Abingdon Drama Club

Things I Know To Be True

by Andrew Bovell

"I know that people aren't perfect, even the ones you love - Especially the ones you love."

Things I Know To Be True is a beautifully observed and deeply moving exploration of family, love and identity focusing on Bob and Fran Price and their 4 adult children.

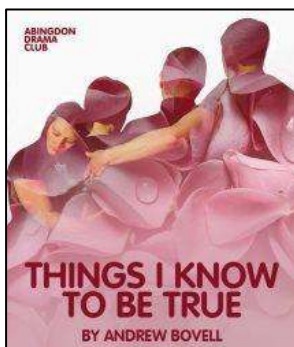
With their children now grown, it may finally be time to slow down and tend to their beloved garden. But as the seasons change, so too does the landscape of their family life. Long-held assumptions are challenged, expectations unravel, and shattering truths emerge, forcing each member of the family to confront who they are - and what they mean to one another.

When: Wed 12th to Sat 15th June at 19:30

Where: Unicorn Theatre, Checker Walk,
Abingdon, OX14 3JB

Tickets: £15 (£12 Concessions) from
www.abingdon-drama-club.com or

The Bookstore, Bury Street (The Precinct, Abingdon)



Banbury Cross Players

Underdog: The Other Other Brontë

by Sarah Gordon

This is a story about sisterhood, love, jealousy and competition. The gritty and controversial plot lines and characters mirror those in Jane Eyre, Agnes Grey and Wuthering Heights.

It is also an irreverent and funny retelling of the life and legend of the Brontë sisters, and the sibling power dynamics that shaped their uneven rise to fame.

A familiar story told with a modern voice that brings these three exceptional women to life for an audience of today.

Suitable for ages 14+. Contains adult language.

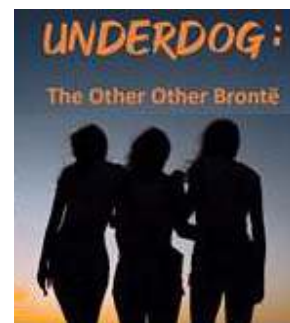
When: Thu 18 to Sat 20 June 2026 at 7.30pm

+ Matinee Sat 20 June at 2.30pm

Where: The Mill Arts Centre, Banbury

Tickets: from The Mill Arts Centre - 01295 279002

www.themillartscentre.co.uk/shows/bcp-underdog



Your NEW ODN Committee

Officers:

Chair	Mandyrae Jessey	(BODS - Wychwood)
Secretary	Karen Carey	(Didcot Phoenix Drama Group)
Newsletter/Website	Mike Davies	(Drayton Players & Jigsaw Stage Productions)
Membership Secretary	Jess Ebberson	(Kennington Amateur Dramatic Society)
Treasurer	Richard Winslet	(Dorchester Amateur Dramatic Society) Treasurer@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org

General members

Mike Lacey	(Kingston Bagpuize)
Sue Hadley	(Drayton Players & Jigsaw Stage Productions)
Mareve Kilbride-Newman	(Witney Dramatic Society)
Adrian McGlynn	(Banbury)
Debbie Ruth	(Buttercross - Witney)
Susi Dalton	(Abingdon Drama Club)

Email: info@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org

Facebook www.facebook.com/groups/1324585987569767

Instagram: www.instagram.com/oxfordshiredramanetwork

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

Email: info@OxfordshireDramaNetwork.org

WINTER FESTIVAL AWARDS

Overall Winners

- 1st Little Mermaid – Kennington Amateur
2nd Hansel & Gretel – Sinodun Players
3rd Robinson Crusoe – Launton Village Players

Front of house

Nominees: BODS, Launton, KADS, Adderbury

Winners: BODS

Best Programme – Abingdon Drama Club

Original Script

Nominees: Launton, Adderbury, BODS, Sinodun

Winners: Adderbury

Technical Excellence

We've decided to split this into 2 categories:

Nominees: Sinodun Players, Launton, Abingdon, BODS/Sapling, KADS, Buttercross

Winners:

Lighting: KADS

Visuals & Sound FX: Buttercross -

Direction

Nominees: Caroline Malnick (Sinodun), Hannah & Louise (KADS), Jamie Cox (Adderbury), Alex Jenkins (Abingdon),

Winner: Alex Jenkins (Abingdon),

Choreography

Nominees: Sinodun, Launton, Buttercross, BODS

Winners: Launton

Costumes/Make-up

Nominees: Abingdon, BODS, Witney, Launton

Winners: BODS

Music

Nominees: Abingdon, Adderbury, Sinodun, KADS

Winners: KADS

Best Comedy Duo

Nominees: Grabbit & Run (Hanney), Frank n Furter (Sinodun), Davy & Jones (KADS), Charlie & Cooper (BODS)

Winners: Frank n Furter (Sinodun)

Best Dame

Nominees: Rachel Winslet-Morris (DADS), Joe Morse (Buttercross), Dave Cook (BODS), Richard Buss (Kingston), Alex Watts (Sinodun), Alan Dannfald (KADS)

Winner: Rachel Winslet-Morris (DADS)

Best Baddie

Nominees: Roisan Barnfather (DADS), Andy Bell (Squire, Hanney), Claire Wheeler (Kingston), Dan Abrahms (Buttercross), Rebecca Cleverly (Sinodun)

Winner: Dan Abrahms (Buttercross) – The big bad wolf

Best chorus

Nominees: Abingdon, Buttercross, Sinodun, Launton, Hanney

Winner: Launton

Rising Star:

Nominees:

Evie Lambert (RRH, Buttercross)
Belle King (Funky Fairy, BODS)
Zak Strange (Purminator, Hanney),
Jonas Trehearne (Billy Trot, Kingston).
Finlay Powell (Hansel, Sinodun),
Millie Morgan (Saplings)

Winner: Belle King (Funky Fairy, BODS)

Best Supporting Role

Nominees:

Nicky Sheriff (Parrot – Launton)
Lucinda Kenrick – Sprat Crusoe DADS
Annabelle Buckland (Sinodun).
Lewis Morely (KADS)

Winner: Nicky Sheriff (Parrot – Launton)

Best Actor

Nominees:

Luke Rasdall (Baron, BODS)
Liam Hamblin (Buttons, Witney),
Paul Cox (Dr Van Dyke, Adderbury)
David Fardon (Crow, Abingdon),

Winner: Liam Hamblin (Buttons, Witney)

Best Actress

Nominees:

Ellie Cox (Smee, Philomena Fumblestick, Adderbury).
Maggie Weston-Hearne (Queen, Hanney)
Abbie Hale (Kingston)
Ashley Parker (Cinderella, Witney),
Pat Giles (KADS)

Winner: Maggie Weston-Hearne (The Queen, Hanney)

Magic Moment

Nominees:

Abingdon – opening trolls,
Buttercross - House blowing down
BODS - Hula hoop routine
Kingston Bagpuize - Castle Corridor chase
Witney - Pumpkin transformation to Coach,
KADS - Meeting of Dame & Admiral
Abingdon - Deer puppet

Winner: Kingston Bagpuize

Overall Winners

Awards
presented by
Mareve
Kilbride-Newman



Runner up

Third



Winter Festival Awards 25/26



WINTER FESTIVAL PANTOMIME REVIEWS

Kingston Bagpuize DG

Jack and the Beanstalk

by James Barry

29th November 2025

Kingston Bagpuize Drama Group's production of Jack and the Beanstalk was a warm-hearted, traditional village pantomime, full of colour, energy and genuine community spirit. From the outset, the audience was welcomed into a show that clearly understood the pleasures of the genre and set out to deliver them with enthusiasm and care.

The presentation was bright and thoughtfully detailed. A projected heart on the curtain at the start was a simple but effective signal that this was a pantomime with romance at its core, and it nicely set the tone. The opening village scene was colourful and inviting, with charming touches such as paper flowers in the window boxes adding character and texture. The contrast between the Palace and the Giant's Castle worked particularly well, with hand-painted portraits helping to differentiate the locations, and the cage in the Giant's lair providing a strong visual focal point. Costumes were clearly well considered throughout, with the Dame's opening outfit with mismatched Crocs was a real treat with the jodhpurs in the second half proving especially memorable and delightfully absurd.

Lighting was kept simple but was consistently effective, supporting the action without drawing attention to itself. Sound effects were well timed and added greatly to the comedy, with the Giant's burps causing predictable but well-earned delight among the younger audience members. The use of transition music was especially successful, helping scene changes feel smooth and maintaining momentum across the show.

There were plenty of opportunities for audience participation, which were enthusiastically embraced. The overall pace was good, and the cast appeared confident in their movements and cues. Entrances and exits were secure, and the storytelling remained clear throughout. At times the chorus felt a little underused, often positioned towards the back of the stage, and there were moments where bringing them further into the action could have added extra visual energy.

Similarly, some comedy routines — notably the baking scene — might have benefited from a slight rethink in positioning, as the action felt a little constrained and key comic moments were occasionally obscured. These are small adjustments rather than fundamental issues and would be easily resolved with further refinement.

Performance-wise, there was much to enjoy. Richard Buss delivered an excellent, thoroughly traditional Dame as Mrs Trott, with superb deadpan delivery and assured comic timing. Fiona Eaton was a strong and engaging Jack, with confident vocal work and an easy rapport with the audience. Jonas Treherne's Silly Billy grew noticeably as the show progressed and became increasingly engaging, particularly during the cow-milking routine with Daisy, which was great fun. Claire Wheeler clearly relished her role as the villainous Mrs Plunder, while Mike Varnom's Giant was suitably dim, making their double act an enjoyable and well-matched pairing. Abbie Hale brought charm and warmth to Princess Rose, alongside a lovely singing voice, and the pantomime cow — always a crowd favourite — was handled with energy and humour, interacting confidently with both cast and audience.

Musically, the show featured a good selection of songs, delivered with enthusiasm. The opening number was lively and set the tone well, while "Don't Stop" provided a high-energy close to Act One. "My Guy" for the Giant and his wife was well performed, and Princess Rose's solo, "Love Story", was a particular highlight — beautifully sung and warmly received. The final number, "Do You Remember", was sung confidently, though the choreography here felt less assured than elsewhere. Overall, the choreography throughout was simple but effective, with comic routines such as the castle creeping sequence landing particularly well. The cow-milking routine was great fun, while the spitting routine perhaps needs a little more spit and polish! The community song, "Old MacDonald Had a Farm", was a clear hit with the audience.

Overall, this was an enjoyable and affectionate pantomime, full of humour, strong character work and a real sense of community. While there are areas where tightening choreography or rethinking stage positioning could have enhanced it, these did little to detract from the obvious enjoyment of both cast and audience. Kingston Bagpuize Drama Group delivered a festive, good-hearted show that sent everyone home smiling and firmly in the Christmas spirit — well done to all involved.

BODS (of Wychwood)

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

What a delightful and imaginative take on a much-loved children's classic! Setting Goldilocks and the Three Bears within Dame Barnum's struggling circus was a creative and engaging twist. With the looming threat of land owner Baron Von Trakmind and the wonderfully wicked Madam Meanie the rival circus owner, the story unfolded with energy and heart as Goldilocks and her circus family worked together to save the show.

From the moment we arrived, it was clear just how much thought and care had gone into creating a fully immersive experience. The front-of-house team did a fantastic job bringing the circus to life—complete with a ticket booth styled as a mini big top, arcade games for children, photo opportunities with a furry elephant, and playful face-in-the-hole boards. It was such a joyful and welcoming start that immediately set the tone for the evening.

Inside the hall, the vibrant circus theme continued beautifully. The red-and-white big top effect above the stage, paired with matching stage décor and colourful podium blocks, created a lively and visually striking setting. The attention to detail really paid off, building excitement and drawing the audience into the world of the show.

The production itself was charmingly presented. Simple backdrops allowed the action to flow freely, while the bright, colourful costumes added to the sense of fun—Dame Barnum's big top dress and sparkly boots were a particular highlight! The inventive "Pie-O-Matic" custard pie machine was a brilliant comic addition, delighting the audience time and again. Behind the scenes, the technical team supported everything seamlessly, with well-timed sound effects and lighting that enhanced the storytelling throughout.

Direction from Mandy-Rae was confident and clear, with a strong opening sequence that immediately captured attention. The cast appeared comfortable and committed, bringing great energy to the stage. While a few entrances could have been a little sharper, and the pace dropped in a few places, the enthusiasm carried the show wonderfully. Audience participation was a real strength—moments like "Big breaths, Bernie!", the classic "behind you!" routine, and the plate-spinning interaction were especially enjoyable. Small touches, like the bears peeking from behind the curtain, added charm and personality.

Music was used effectively throughout, blending AI-created pieces with familiar classics. Highlights included the "Spoonful of Sugar/Honey Honey" mash-up, "Rockefeller," and "Stuck in the Middle with You." The Act One finale, Britney Spears' Circus, was especially strong, featuring an excellent hula hoop routine from Audree Leonard-Taylor. At times, some lyrics—particularly in Madam Meanie's number—

were a little difficult to catch, but this didn't detract significantly from the enjoyment.

There were many lovely performances across the cast. Daisy Ball brought a sweet and sincere quality to Goldilocks, while David Cooke's Dame Barnum was full of energy, strong comic timing, and a wonderful connection with the audience. His scenes with Luke Rasdall's Baron Von Trakmind—full of bold character and reminiscent of Rik Mayall's Flashheart—were particularly entertaining.

Lyn Newbold's Ringo was expressive and engaging, with great physicality, while Belle King showed impressive confidence and maturity as Funky Fairy Featherwings, especially in her audience interaction moments. Stephen Ricketts and Joseph Bates added fun and intrigue as the clowns, and Teresa O'Hara gave Madam Meanie a strong, commanding presence—with just a little more bite, she could become even more deliciously villainous. The three bears worked wonderfully as a trio, with Ian O'Hara standing out for his strong vocal presence. Most importantly, the whole cast looked fully engaged and clearly enjoyed themselves—and that joy was infectious.

Overall, this was a vibrant, colourful, and thoroughly enjoyable pantomime that truly transported the audience into the magical world of the circus. A huge well done to everyone involved—this was a production full of heart, creativity, and community spirit.

KADs (of Kennington)

The Little Mermaid.

Congratulations to KADs on their highly spectacular and totally stylish presentation of The Little Mermaid. From the excited buzz in the foyer, right through to the end of the production, we were joyously brought into an underwater world of magic, laughter and intrigue.

The fabulous set was designed cleverly to move us convincingly from the underwater world to a ship's deck to a palace. Attention to detail was obvious everywhere. Costumes were spectacular and supported the genre and personality of the characters completely. Makeup was excellent and further added to the clarity of the characters' personalities and their place in the story. The whole effect was outstanding and spoke to a clear understanding of the interaction of how to use set, costume and makeup to create a believable fantasy.

Lighting, sound and SFX were all executed with absolute precision and were used creatively to enhance the action and mood throughout the production. Creative use of the projector added to the atmosphere of the set, particularly for the underwater scenes and the shipwreck.

There were several strong performances and characterisation was secure throughout. Eve Welch gave a lovely performance as the petulant but kind-hearted Pearl. Paig Morley as Mother of Pearl kept us up to date with all happenings with her delightful performance and touch of magic. Leigh-Anne El-Baghdadi and Natasha Watts-Jones gave excellent performances as Davey and Jones being convincingly both nasty and stupid. Their portrayal of lesser forms of sea life was spot on. Amy Wilson as Prince Finn was a wonderful leading boy and we were in safe hands as Natalie Harris gave a regal performance as Queen Neptuna. Pat Giles gave a particularly strong performance as Octavia. Her excellent singing ensured that her songs were delivered with evil eloquence. Allen Dannfald, as Persil the Dame, had us in fits of laughter anticipating a series of hilarious antics carried off with style and conviction. His rapport with Admiral C. Weed, played by Lewis Morley made for some top-class comedy routines. Both performed with confidence and skill. Hannah Gordon was tireless in her portrayal of Thermidor. Her characterisation was flowless even down to her control of those pinchers. Sarah Duke, in the title role as Ariel, had a good command of the stage and an excellent singing voice. Her interaction with her co-conspirators, Persil and Thermidor, demonstrated a high level of support between these three. The chorus was very well rehearsed. Their discipline in no way impeded their fluidity and freshness. The singing and dancing were polished. The younger players were confident and complimented the creative atmosphere of the production, especially as the sea creatures and seaweed.

The music and choreography took the show to another level and ensured that the audience was emotionally engaged. The character motifs were very appropriate and allowed us to anticipate a change in atmosphere. Attention to detail was obvious throughout and added to the panache of the whole production. The addition of a live band added good texture.

The directors' highly creative approach and good interpretation into the script ensured a final product which was polished and stylish. They had a clear vision of what they wanted and successfully motivated the crew and cast into accepting and support this vision and producing a most enjoyable show. Well done all.

Adderbury Theatre Workshop

Once Upon a Panto

This wonderfully inventive and well scripted production was a joy to watch and was very well received by the enthusiastic audience.

The set was minimal but rose to the challenge of an ambitious plot and fixed the action clearly for the audience as the plot unfolded. Costumes were utilised well to identify the various characters and supported the plot well as we tumbled through a series of very well identified faery stories. Make-up was used imaginatively to identify a huge variety of characters and roles. The overall effect took the audience seamlessly through this extremely creative production. Lighting and sound supported the action on stage and there was good use of the projector, especially in the jungle scene.

Bryony, Darcy, Maisie-Bleu, Huw and Effie gave confident performances as the Misfits. Aud Humphrey as the Narrator kept us on task and never lost us as she skilfully took us through the plot. The romantic duo, Jack and Jill played by Alison Heath and Diane Grant sustained their roles well through what could have been, but wasn't, a confusing array of faery stories. Paul Cox gave a particularly strong performance as the evil Dr. Van Dyke. He was always in control of the stage and the audience with excellent timing and flair. Archie Fox did a good job as Simba ably supported by Megan Cox and Richard Cox as Sarabi and Mufasa. Linda Leslie gave an hilarious performance as Doc in the extremely well-acted and funny, Snow White scene. Becky Cheesman and Suzie Taylor as Rapunzel and Prince Charming gave convincing performances and engaged well together, particularly in their duet. Ellie Cox as Peter Pan was full of energy and was spot on with her interpretation of the role. Viki Szekely and Rosie Franklin as Wendy and Tinkerbell sustained a wonderful 'attitude' throughout their scene. Melanie Cox as Hook and Macie Cheesman as Smee contributed well to the hilarity of the scene. Their routine was well rehearsed and worked. Karen Dwyer's Faery Godmother sparkled, particularly her wonderful singing. Andrew Green and Max Taylor gave hilarious performances as bird brains, Norm and Reg. Gary Leonardi's interpretation of Madam Clarey had us totally engaged. Henry Taylor as Baldstaick, the wanna-be lumberjack gave a convincing performance ably assisted by Ellie Cox as the love-struck Philamena Fumblestick. Linda Leslie as Mary Poppins, Becky Cheesman as Cinderella and Su English as Aladdin, gave a highly entertaining comedy routine and delivered their song very well.

The comic routines worked well demonstrating a real understanding of comic timing, particularly the dwarf scene and Philamena Fumblestick. The live music added greatly to the performances. The music was well chosen and fitted meaningfully into the plot.

The director also wrote the script and had a clear idea as to how the story should unfold. Theatrical devices such as set, costume, lighting and sound were very well controlled to present a coherent and cohesive production. The cast's sense of joy and fun came across very clearly.

Hanney Drama Group

Puss in Boots

This was a charming and lively retelling of a much-loved tale, full of warmth, humour, and community spirit. The story of the clever Puss helping the Miller's son win the heart of Princess Rose—while outwitting the delightfully villainous Squire Squeezum and his mischievous sidekicks—was brought to life with great enthusiasm and heart.

From the outset, there was a wonderfully friendly and welcoming atmosphere. The opening announcement over the PA, filled with local references, was a lovely touch that immediately connected with the audience and set the tone for an enjoyable evening.

The production was thoughtfully staged, making excellent use of the space. The medieval setting was clearly established through simple painted backdrops, which worked perfectly to allow freedom of movement on a smaller stage. Additional props—such as “Jack’s Junk” and “Jill’s Jumble” in the village scene, and touches of greenery in the woodland—added charm and variety.

Given the limitations of the venue, the technical team showed real creativity. Lighting was used effectively to enhance key moments—spotlighting the villain during audience interaction, adding subtle effects for romantic encounters, and creating atmosphere in the castle scenes with flickering lights and eerie sounds. The sound effects were equally engaging, from birdsong and mooing cattle that grounded us in the countryside, to the wonderfully comic scraping sound of the Purrrinator’s entrance!

Costumes reflected the medieval setting well, with traditional styles helping to establish character and period. While the Dame’s outfit stood out as more modern in style, it certainly brought colour and personality to the stage.

Music played a central role in the production and was delivered with great energy and commitment throughout. From the opening number “We Built Our Village” to the joyful finale “Marry You,” the cast embraced every song with enthusiasm. The inclusion of transition music helped maintain a smooth flow between scenes, and it was a lovely touch to see the keyboard player, Chris Salt, in costume and part of the onstage world.

There were many musical highlights. Andy Bell’s performance of “I Want It All” as Squire Squeezum was full of flair and confidence, while the comedy duo Grabbit and Runn (Sarah Strange and Emily Browne) delighted with their lively “We Need a Guinea Guinea” number, complete with fun choreography. The love duet, “You Are My One Love,” was a challenging

choice but performed sweetly, accompanied by a gentle and engaging dance. The community song “Run/Grabbit” brought great fun and audience enjoyment. One number, “You Are the Sunshine of My Life,” felt slightly less in keeping with the rest of the show, but this was a small point in an otherwise strong musical programme.

Audience engagement was a real strength, with classic pantomime routines such as the “behind you” ghost sequence proving very effective. A standout moment came from young Zack Strange as the Purrrinator—a confident and scene-stealing performance that promises great things for the future! Director Charlie East clearly kept the audience at the heart of his vision, ensuring the action flowed well, the comedy was well-rehearsed, and the pacing remained lively.

The cast delivered strong vocal performances throughout, supported by a chorus that once again demonstrated why they were award-winning—full of energy, enthusiasm, and infectious smiles (not to mention some memorable choreography!).

Andy Bell’s Squire Squeezum was a wonderfully animated villain, full of physicality and vocal strength, working brilliantly alongside his comedic accomplices. Iain Gray’s Dame, Aunt Maisie, was bright, engaging, and full of warmth, with excellent comic timing. Dan Churchill-Coleman brought charm and expressiveness to Mark, connecting well with the audience, while Judith Roberts gave a confident performance as Puss, capturing the character’s presence—adding a few more feline mannerisms could make this portrayal even stronger.

Sarah Strange and Emily Browne made a dynamic and entertaining double act as Grabbit and Runn, keeping the pace brisk and the humour flowing. Maggie Weston-Hearne’s Queen was delightfully regal and commanding, providing a strong contrast to David Coates’ wonderfully understated and endearing King Hugo. Louise Bailey’s Princess Rose was gentle and sincere, with a lovely singing voice—adding a little more brightness in expression would elevate her performance further. Charlie East’s Windy Miller brought a warm, Hagrid-like presence that added depth to the story.

Overall, this was a thoroughly enjoyable production, filled with heart, humour, and a strong sense of community. The enthusiasm of everyone involved shone through, creating a performance that was both entertaining and uplifting.

A big well done to Hanney Drama Group—this was a show full of joy and teamwork, and it was a pleasure to watch.

Launton Village Players

Treasure Island

Returning to Launton is always a special experience—and this production was a shining example of why. From the very moment you arrive, it's clear that the audience is at the very heart of everything they do. From the friendly parking attendants and clear signage guiding you through the school grounds, to the wonderfully welcoming front-of-house team, the entire operation runs with impressive care and precision. Even before the curtain rises, the atmosphere is alive with energy—puppets and remote-controlled animals delight younger audience members, accompanied by the ever-enjoyable house band. It's immersive, engaging, and sets the tone beautifully for what is to come.

This inventive original script by Rod and Nikki Fine offered a fresh and imaginative twist on Treasure Island, transporting us to the vibrant seaside town of Launhaven. The concept of Captain Hook being magically brought to life from a book in a local library on Story Magic Day, was both clever and engaging, providing a strong foundation for a story full of adventure and humour.

Visually, the production was stunning. A beautifully painted waterfront dock scene spanned the stage, creating a vivid and colourful backdrop. Seamless transitions—achieved through clever use of side panels and front-of-curtain scenes—took us effortlessly from docks to library, from scrubby to the high seas. The technical team deserves huge praise for creating such a dynamic world within the space.

Lighting and effects were used to exceptional effect throughout, enhancing both the storytelling and the atmosphere. A standout moment was the breathtaking ultraviolet dance sequence, where glowing seahorses appeared to pull the ship from the doldrums—truly magical and visually captivating.

Creative props added another layer of fun, with the wonderfully inventive “Scrub-a-Dub-Dub 500” generating huge laughs as items went in dirty and came out sparkling clean. Sound effects and music cues were perfectly timed, supporting the action and adding to the immersive experience.

Under the direction of Julia West, this production became far more than a pantomime—it was a full-scale musical and dance extravaganza, delivered with confidence, clarity, and a deep understanding of what makes live theatre so special.

What truly set this show apart was its unwavering commitment to audience engagement. This wasn't simply a performance to be watched—it was an experience to be part of. From interactive comedy routines to balls flying through the audience, water

pistols, sweets, glow sticks, and even a communal “Happy Birthday” celebration, the audience was constantly included, delighted, and surprised. Every directorial choice felt rooted in the joy of shared experience, and it paid off in abundance.

The scale of this production was remarkable, with one of the largest casts in the ODN delivering a true spectacle. The chorus was outstanding—full of energy, enthusiasm, and commitment, with every performer contributing to the vibrant atmosphere.

The choreography, reminiscent of a Busby Berkeley-style extravaganza, was ambitious and joyful, with large ensemble numbers performed with precision and infectious enthusiasm. From the youngest cast members to the most experienced, everyone performed with a smile and a clear sense of enjoyment that carried into the audience.

With such a large and talented cast, it's impossible to mention everyone, but there were many standout performances. Beth Heale's Libby, the magical librarian, was warm and engaging, building a lovely rapport with the audience and delivering strong vocals. Mark Hudson's Dame Marigold was a delight from the moment of his memorable entrance on a bicycle, bringing excellent comic timing and energy throughout. Natasha Patrick and Steph Poulson made a well-matched and charming principal pair, delivering a lovely duet with sincerity. John Nelson's Captain Hook worked tirelessly to earn the audience's boos, while Nik Sherriff's Polly the parrot was a particular highlight—full of character, with wonderfully sustained physical detail that brought the role vividly to life.

The comedy pairings were especially strong. Daisy Richards and Dan Chilvers as Smee and Sim brought great physicality and humour, while Kate Gordon and Andy Roberts as Nat and Pat provided plenty of laughs as the hapless fishermen. Jackie Webber also impressed as the no-nonsense mayor, adding strength and presence to the ensemble.

This was a production that truly celebrated what community theatre can achieve at its very best. It was joyful, ambitious, and brilliantly executed—but above all, it placed the audience front and centre, creating an experience that was as interactive as it was entertaining.

Launton Village Players have once again demonstrated how powerful it is to truly play with an audience, drawing them into the heart of the story and making them feel part of something special. The result is not only a spectacular show, but one that leaves a lasting impression—and continues to support their fantastic work within the local community.

A huge congratulations to everyone involved—this was theatre at its most inclusive, imaginative, and uplifting.