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Message from the society Chair

Rachel's Ramble

A big thank you to all members, family and friends who came and supported 'Crazy For You'. We had a fantastic response from our audiences, some of which we have included later in the newsletter. The cast and crew worked extremely hard on this show, and I think can be justifiably proud of the results. We are still counting up income against outgoings, and will have the final results in a later newsletter, but we sold over 83% of seats and over £1000 worth of programmes, which is great.

Preparations are already in hand for our 2010 show 'Disney's Beauty and the Beast'. Watford Palace Theatre have approached us with a potential week already, so I hope to confirm performance dates VERY SOON, which is extremely exciting. The show is only on release for a limited period, and sets and costumes are already getting booked up, so the sooner we can make confirmed orders, the better.

I hope you are all enjoying the sun (when it happens)!

'Crazy for You' - reflections on our most recent show



Monday 20th April to Saturday 25th April 2008

We've had some very good feedback, which we'd like to share with you all. Councillor Jan Brown, who is Chair of Watford Borough Council and a big Gershwin fan wrote to say how much she enjoyed our performance and commented on the professionalism of cast and crew. The Mayor of Hertsmere, who is one of our Patrons, enjoyed our show and wrote us a letter of congratulations, with a donation to the Society's funds. Mrs Heather Bogan, a loyal 'fan' of our society from Dorset, attended the show and wrote to let us know that our production "put most London shows in the shade". Of course, it's always good to hear positive feedback but when our audiences are inspired to put pen to paper, we know we've done a good job.

A word from our wonderful MD, Peter Holt, whose praises were sung by our audiences. Unfortunately, he accidentally provided us with the wrong biography for the programme. As a result, the message he very much wished to convey to the society was missed. We have printed the correct biography below:

PETER HOLT

A Lancastrian, Peter joined the BBC in Manchester, as Assistant Librarian to the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra (now the BBC Philharmonic). In 1970, he was appointed Librarian to the BBC Radio Big Band in London and moved into orchestral management in 1973. He ran the BBC Light Music Unit, until the establishment of the Langham Chamber Orchestra, in 1981, when he became their manager. Following one of many re-organisations in the music department, Peter left the BBC in 1988 and was appointed orchestral manager of the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra.

Peter has MD'd over 40 productions including *Carousel*, *My Fair Lady*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Sweet Charity*, *The Sound of Music*, *Chicago*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Hello Dolly!*, *Mack & Mabel*, *Pyjama Game*, *Crazy for You*, *42nd Street*, *Oliver*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Me and My Girl*, *West Side Story*, *Anything Goes* and several of Sullivan's operettas, mainly with Abbots Langley G & S Society. At the Buxton International G & S Festival last year, Peter was nominated for Best Musical Director, with Abbots Langley's performance of *Ruddigore*. He is delighted to have been invited to MD Watford Operatic Society's *Crazy for You*, and has enjoyed working with this talented cast and production team for this fantastic Gershwin musical.

'Crazy for You' - our NODA review

Highlights of the NODA (London) review of "Crazy for You" is set out below. For information, Josie came to the Saturday matinee performance.

I knew this was going to be a great show musically right from the overture, when the orchestra, under the expert baton of MD Peter Holt, played the Gershwin score so beautifully. Then throughout this production, although loads of predominant bass, they never once overpowered the singers. So a big

thank you for that. As I would expect from an operatic society the singing was lovely with some beautiful harmonies from the chorus plus solos and duets also very well sung. I guess you are well pleased with Peter Holt in his debut for WOS, as his vast expertise was outstanding.

I think the success of this production was down to the magnificent marvellous choreography of Matt Fowler. Right from the opening, his fantastic dancers in their spectacular costumes really grabbed me. To my mind, Matt is a very talented young man as an actor, director and dancer, so most of the credit appeared to go to his inspirational choreography.

NEIL RICHARD TOONE did well as Bobby. Neil has a pleasing singing voice and is an excellent dancer, but he seemed to lack some energy until he was portraying Zangler. Neil was transformed as he shone when impersonating the impresario and so much better being the other man which was strange. Neil is an excellent mover, so all his dancing numbers were great. Sadly, there was no chemistry between Bobby and Polly and I would have expected more sparks to fly with their scenes.

KATIE DON-HUGHES was good as Polly. She looked cute as the country hick, sang sweetly and danced beautifully. Katie was equally feisty, indignant, mixed up and strong headed in this role. I found Polly a bit over bearing towards her poor Dad as there was no warmth there. Also, as I said above, there was no chemistry between her and Bobby. This was supposed to be a love story after all. Their partnership was like performing exhibition dance routines, which were marvellous, but otherwise not a portrayal of their relationship.

MARC HOWDEN-SMITH was very good as the rough, angry bar hotel owner, Lank. Being spurned by Polly, he became more and more like an uncouth bully. There was some comedy in this role too, as at times he behaved like Basil Fawlty throwing a tantrum. Later, being seduced by Irene, he was hilarious.

PENNY LONGHURST started off as Irene, being the rich, cool, classy, frustrated fiancée of Bobby. She had some lovely running battles in dialogue with future mother-in-law, with great put downs played with panache. However, the ice maiden surprisingly turned into a torrid tigress in Act 2, with a dazzling display of sizzling seduction, which was hilarious. What a revelation this was to all and we can guess who wore the trousers in that marriage.

I liked PAUL WOODSTOCK as Dad Everett. He gave a lovely warm portrayal of the bumbling weak widower living in the past that could not let go of his lost dead wife. It was a shame his daughter was not more supportive, as she seemed very hard-hearted and unsympathetic towards his predicament.

I was disappointed by the portrayals of Eugene and Patricia Fodor. Played by TIM OAKLEY & DEBBIE TAYLOR, these two eccentric English characters could have really gone over the top in daft comic weirdness. As people supposed to be there to write a travel book, they were almost in a time warp, from a different planet, therefore needed to be a lot funnier in the extreme.

Now, ANNIE URQUHART-SIMONS gave a beautiful performance playing the overpowering Lottie. As a mother and future mother-in-law from hell, she was just magnificent. What a woman! As the controlling battleaxe, Lottie, Annie had some of the best lines in the script, which she used to

perfection. Plus, her timing was brilliantly spot-on. I would have like to have seen more of this character as she was such a joy to watch and gave a master class in real classy acting.

Your PINK LADIES and FOLLIES DANCERS were just out of this world. Wonderful and spectacular to look at, brilliant dancing and movement, plus they not only looked good, they all SMILED constantly. An utter joy to watch their talented performances. Also, MELANIE FRANKLIN was great as the gutsy Tess, trying to put off the randy advances of Zangler. Melanie had a lot of oomph and panache, which showed in this performance.

Your men were very good as Cowboys. I don't know who the two young fellers were, doing the specialised dancing, but they did exceedingly well. The cowboys stayed in character and were believable as roughneck chaps from out West, whose lives had been transformed by an influx of ravishingly beautiful girls.

From the spectacular opening, to the fantastic finale, it was a most enjoyable show, with a feel-good atmosphere, which had us tapping our toes. Just the thing to take our minds off the dreary credit crunch.

Lighting design and operation was excellent and Sound also great, with every word clear as a bell.

Costumes were just beautiful, out of this world, really lovely. So, many congratulations to your wardrobe department for dressing this show so beautifully, especially the ladies' ones. Make-up and wigs also looked good and in period.

I must thank your committee for inviting me along to review your show, plus many thanks to Vicky Farman for her warm welcome, hospitality and sorting out my tickets. It was such a pleasure to have someone like Vicky at Front of House, who could get things done so efficiently and pleasantly.

With best wishes, Josie Shingles (NODA, London)

Our next show - an update on 'Beauty and the Beast'

As you know, our 2010 show will be Disney's 'Beauty and the Beast'. Adapted from the Oscar-winning animated feature film, it's a wonderful show that tells the story of Belle, a young woman in a provincial French town and of the Beast, who is really a young prince, trapped in a spell by an evil enchantress. If the Beast can learn to love and be loved, the curse will end and he will be transformed to his former self. But time is running out. If the Beast does not learn his lesson soon, he and his household will be doomed for all eternity ...

Seen by over 25 million people, this simple love story with fairytale sets and fantastic costumes is one of the biggest musicals of all time. Nominated for nine Tony awards, including Best Musical, 'Beauty and The Beast' has had runs all over the world, including 2½ years in London's West End. WOS will be one of the first ever amateur groups to be licensed to put on the show, which is a great accolade for our society.

We're delighted to announce that 'Beauty and the Beast' will be brought to you by the same fabulous and talented team that produced the Society's wonderful version of 'Chess', last year. Alan Cox is to direct the show, with Bill Pamplin as MD and Jacqueline Harman as Choreographer.

As Rachel commented in her 'Ramble', we have not yet been able to confirm dates with the Palace theatre, but will let you know when we do.

To prepare for the show, there are lots of tasks, large and small, that need to be undertaken by the Society. If you're interested in joining the committee and becoming more involved with the work of Watford Operatic Society all year round, please let us know. Contact Rachel Curren, our chair, at rachel.curren@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM will be held on Thursday 8th October.

News from other societies

Cassio Anniversary Quiz

Jill Gillam, social secretary of Cassio Operatic Society, has invited all our members to join Cassio at an 80th Anniversary Quiz in July. She writes:

There is to be a Quiz Night at the Town and Country Club in Watford on Saturday 4th July to be hosted by Jo Sherry and Alan Nicholson. The ticket price is £10 and will include a fish 'n chips supper. Tables will be 6 or 8, so you can come on your own or bring your own party. The evening is open to friends and family as well as old members and will begin at 7.00 for a 7.30pm start. These evenings are always fun and we hope to get as many people there as possible - so book NOW!

More details are available from Jill on 01923 220 787 or email jgillam@eggconnect.net

News from our members



We send our love and congratulations to **Beryl Gilbert**, one of our wonderful life members, who celebrated her 90th birthday on May 20th. Beryl has been associated with the society since moving to Watford in 1945, when she married Doug. Beryl has been in shows, was Social Secretary, and for many years was the society's prompter. Still a keen supporter of the society, she takes an active interest in everything they are doing and is kept up to date through news from her daughter Nicky (Chryssaphes).

We hope you had a wonderful day, Beryl.