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### **Message from the society Chair**

#### *Rachel's Ramble*

I hope you have all had a happy, enjoyable and restful summer. For the first time this year, I took part in something that certainly qualifies for the first two but definitely not the latter - and I would definitely recommend it to you all.

Ripon Operatic Summer School runs for one intensive week each summer, people from amateur societies all over the UK come together to perform in one of three fully staged and costumed extracts from a show. You arrive Saturday afternoon, audition at 9am the next day and start rehearsals after lunch. The week flies by in a hectic schedule of setting dance numbers, learning music and dialogue, costume fittings - plus all the social activities at night - a pub quiz, Sing-Along-a-Abba, make up demonstration. I took part in Class C, which staged a 45 minute extract from *La Cage Aux Folles*, directed by Martyn Knight. Everyone was 'double-cast', playing a Cagelle in the afternoon performance and a part in the evening or vice versa.

The point of the week is to learn and we certainly were challenged and taken beyond our usual comfort zones - Nicky Chryssaphes had to learn a tap number, Rob Jarman played the son (one of only two straight male parts in the show), and I did my best as the only alto in the group. Another class was led by Nikki Scott and Martin Smith, producing a hilarious, hectic and condensed *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, with all sorts of cross-dressing and gender transformation. Some of our own lovely ladies had key roles. Jo Sherry took the lead of the wily slave Pseudolus, Annie Simons was a brothel owner and Dotti Lawson an old man (yes, ROSS suffers from the same old problem of not enough men, although it was partly because so many of them wanted to slip into frocks and slap for La Cage!). The third class, directed by Ray Jeffrey, performed the second act of *Die Fledermaus*. Many friends and contacts were made, much learned and great fun was had by all.

Next year's school, taking place again at Scarborough in mid-August, has a choice of *Chess* (with Ray Jeffrey), *Parade* (with Nikki and Martin) or a medley of dance and song from the shows (with Martyn Knight). The week costs just under £600, which includes all accommodation and meals, and you'll wish you had booked another holiday afterwards to recover, but I strongly recommend this experience to you all.

Now back to local matters - we have been given our dates for *Beauty and the Beast*, which will be at Watford Palace Theatre 10<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009, more details in the newsletter, including pre-audition and audition dates. This is fantastic news, as it has allowed us to start our plans so much earlier. The three societies will be

meeting with the theatre shortly to explore how we can continue to work in this co-operative way with each other. Our AGM is slightly later this year, and will actually coincide with our first Beauty and Beast get-together on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November. I do hope to see very many of you then, to talk about the year just gone and learn about the excitement of the year to come.

We are talking with Cassio about another joint carol singing evening, and are looking to get a better pitch allocated than that of last year, so look out for details in the next newsletter.

Rachel

### **Annual General Meeting**

Please note the change of date. The Society's AGM will be held at 8.30pm on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November, at Watford Fields Junior School, Elfrida Road, Watford, as part of the first pre-audition rehearsal for our next production, 'Beauty and The Beast'. Details below. We look forward to seeing you there.

### **Our next show: 'Beauty and the Beast' (10<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> May 2010)**

Our first pre-audition rehearsal will be on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November at 8pm. Our production team, Alan Cox (Director), Bill Pamplin (MD) and Jacqueline Harman (Choreographer) will introduce us all to the show and discuss with us their plans for the production. At 8.30pm, we will break for the Annual General Meeting. At 9.30pm, the pre-audition rehearsals for the show will continue and, at this time, the audition materials will be made available. The subsequent pre-audition rehearsals will be Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> (also New Members' auditions) and Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> November, with auditions on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November. The first rehearsal will be on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January.

As usual, it is a Society requirement that only fully paid-up members may audition. Annual subscriptions will be payable as usual at the AGM on 19<sup>th</sup> November. Vicky Farman, our membership secretary, will be on hand to take your cheques for £25.00 for full membership, at the pre-audition rehearsals. Junior membership (16 and under) is £10.00 and Associate membership (which does not entitle you to vote at the AGM, nor audition for a WOS show) is £15.00.

A reminder that, in order to put on a show to our usual high standards, there are lots of tasks, large and small, that need to be undertaken by the Society. If you're able to help out, please let us know. Contact Rachel Curren, our chair, at [rachel.curren@gmail.com](mailto:rachel.curren@gmail.com). We look forward to hearing from you.

### **Update on Watford Operatic Society's Concert Group, from Marion Sherry**



"Another successful season completed, with all concerts well received and £265 in donations to give to the charity of our choice, which this year is 'Dogs for the Disabled'. This is another organisation that gets no government funding and which does such wonderful work. If any of you have seen one of these dogs in action, you cannot be anything other than amazed at what they can do. We shall ask, as usual, that our donations be directed to the Watford area, as there must be many locally who are in need of this service.

During the year, we celebrated the marriage of Ian Duggan to Sarah and wish them all good fortune in the future.

In addition to our regular venues, Cross St Blind, Welcome Club, Croxley House, Greensleeves, Chalfont Court and Hazlemead Women's Club, we also performed for the Watford Lions and for the Cassio University of the Third Age, both very well received.

We have now compiled our programme for the coming year and hope to have as good a time in 2009/10."

Marion Sherry

### **Crazy for You – Noda Review**

Apologies to Jeremy Cohen, whose wonderful portrayal of Bela Zangler in our April production of Crazy for You was accidentally lost from the report from Noda that was published in our last newsletter. Here is that section of the review. Sorry again, Jeremy.

“Jeremy Cohen did a great performance being Zangler. As the womanising impresario, he was excellent but best scene must have been with Bobby doing the mirrored number which was exceedingly clever with wonderful timing from both of them.”

NODA

## News from other societies



Many of our members are involved with **Cassio Operatic Society's** production of 'The Music Man', which will be at the Watford Palace Theatre from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November. As this year is Cassio's Diamond Jubilee, this is a very special production for the Society. Many Cassio members are booking their seats for Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November's performance, as there will be an informal reunion event in the Palace Theatre bar afterwards. All past and present Cassio Operatic Society members are very welcome and it will be a great chance to catch up with friends.

Here is a quick synopsis for those that don't know the show. "Professor" Harold Hill is a con man who sells musical instruments, pretending that he will teach youngsters to play them and form a town band. His plan to carry out the scam at a small town in Iowa is thwarted when he meets Marian Paroo, the local librarian, who immediately recognises him as the fraud he is. When the town officials become suspicious of him, he forms them into a barbershop quartet. He gets around the ladies of the town by encouraging them to put on a concert and he wins Marian over by his kindness towards her younger brother. Of course, Hill is eventually found out, but do come along and enjoy the show and find out what happens!

Tickets from the Palace Theatre box office as usual, the website is <http://www.watfordtheatre.co.uk/> or call the box office on 01923 22 56 71.

**St Albans Operatic Society** is proud to present Stephen Sondheim's "Sweeney Todd – The Demon Barber of Fleet Street" at the Alban Arena, St Albans from Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October. This multi award winning show has a first class production team in Alan Cox and Philip Joslin as well as lighting design by Ian Sanders.

Set in 18th century London, and telling the story of the most notorious barber who ever practised his trade, the show is a dark and enthralling tale of love, obsession, murder and, ultimately, redemption. As well as Sondheim's compelling musical score, the show is thrilling, chilling and, in places, extremely funny. This production features a number of WOS regulars including Matthew and Charlotte Gregory in the Sweeney Todd and Mrs Lovett roles, Russell Stratton and Julian Wathen.

Tickets can be bought from the Alban Arena on 01727 844 488 or via [www.alban-arena.co.uk](http://www.alban-arena.co.uk).

## News from our members



Wedding news! Congratulations to two of our members, Emma Southorn and Russell Stratton, who were married at St Lawrence the Martyr Parish Church in Abbots Langley, on Saturday 15 August. We wish them every happiness for their lives together.

And welcome back, Cameron and Verity Roberts, who have returned to the area after several years in Australia.