

Noises Off

From the Editor's desk

"You may please all the members some of the time, you can even please some of the members all of the time, but you cannot please all of the members all the time" (with apologies to Abraham Lincoln). That is the dilemma which faces the Committee from time to time, particularly when it comes to choosing which show the Society should next perform. So perhaps it should have been no surprise when, following the announcement that the Committee had decided that the Society's show should be "Annie Get Your Gun", it did not meet the whole-hearted support of all members.

Although the Society includes the word "Operatic" in its title, its Constitution makes it clear that in pursuit of its aims it may promote musical works other than operas or operettas. And historically the Society has tried to meet the wishes of all its members some of the time by having in its programme of shows a mixture of operettas and what one might describe as "West End shows". Over the last ten years the ratio has been 15:5; but more recently this has been slightly more balanced with 5 operettas and 3 musical shows. Even so, it was not so very long ago that the Committee faced the criticism that when choosing shows it was placing too much emphasis on operettas which were making financial losses.

If only all that the Committee had to do was to choose shows which the members wanted to perform. Unfortunately it is not that simple. Although most often it is possible to indulge members with shows that they enjoy and would like to perform or even ones that they have shown they are good at, when expenditure on a production tops £25K regard always has to be had to the profitability of a chosen show. There are perhaps members who can recall that when the Committee's choice of show was last overturned and substituted by one of the Members' choosing that show returned a record £7,000 loss.

A lot of time and effort is put into researching, costing and considering resources when choosing a show which best serves the interests of the Society, its Members and the prospective audience; unfortunately it is easier to take a negative view of the outcome of a show-



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NB. e-addresses can be found on the Society's website at www.readingops.co.uk

choosing exercise when influenced by personal preferences than it is to make a positive suggestion for shows based on detailed costed information. Perhaps we should have confidence in our Committee.

Elsewhere in this edition is a note from our Chairman about the concert at The Hexagon on 13th April in aid of the Cardiac Fund at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Some Members who have internet access will already have seen this and it is reproduced for the benefit of those who do not. David Parsonson is indeed to be congratulated for the professional way he brought together so many disparate individuals and groups to produce such a successful concert for a capacity audience as a fitting tribute to Geoff Bamford.

Promoting the Society remains one of our priorities and the concert provided an ideal opportunity for it to demonstrate its talents as well as to be compared with the other amateur societies in the local area. Those who took part, watched in the audience or who will be able to view the concert on the DVD which will be printed shortly will no doubt agree that we came away with flying colours.

It is a disappointment therefore that, so far, there is only limited support from Members for a planned concert at Arborfield, on the evening of their Annual Fête on 21 June 2008, which incidentally would also raise much needed funds, The Society will also be manning two stalls at the Show as a discrete fund-raising exercise and anyone able to help with this should contact Jean Theobald.

It is hoped that editions of this newsletter will soon be available on line, accessible through a secure members' page on the Society's website. If you haven't let the membership secretary know your e-mail address perhaps you would like to do so.

Brian Veale



100 CLUB

The winners of the **MARCH 2008** draw were:

1 st prize of £20	Tony Slevin	No. 70
2 nd prize of £10	Edwin Dyer	No. 43
3 rd prize of £5	Ann Peddle	No. 29
4 th prize of £5	Jean Theobald	No. 32

Winners of the **APRIL 2008** draw were:

1 st prize of £20	Judy Greenwood	No. 47
2 nd prize of £10	Ray May	No. 20
3 rd prize of £5	Joyce Bamford	No. 3
4 th prize of £5	Terry Blake	No. 92

CATCHING UP ON THE NEWS

CONGRATULATIONS to Helen Eastwood on her successful lead role in *West Side Story* with HAODS.

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WELCOME to new members Katie Gumbrell, Anna Jennings, Sam Miller, Melody Munro, David Saunders, Tara Smart and Adrian Tang

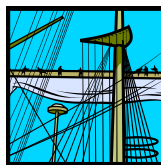
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



A reminder that the Annual General Meeting of Reading Operatic Society will be held at St Peter's Church Hall on **THURSDAY 5TH JUNE 2008 at 8 pm**. A copy of the Agenda and relevant documents to be put before the AGM will be sent to members nearer the date.

In the meantime members should remember that written notice of any business which a member wishes to be transacted at the AGM, including nominations for President, Vice Presidents, Chairman, other officers (each for a one year term), 3 Committee Members (two for a three-year term and one for a one-year term) and independent examiner, should be sent to the Secretary no later than **8th MAY 2008**.

Have you thought about standing as an Officer or Member of the Management Committee? This is your opportunity of influencing how the Society is run. Nominations must be signed by the proposer and seconder (who must both be members of the Society) and countersigned by the nominee to indicate acceptance of the nomination and, in the case of positions on the Management Committee, to confirm that s/he is not disqualified from acting as a Trustee of a Charity.



SHOW NEWS - HMS PINAFORE

In the last edition it was mentioned that this was a successful show despite some alarms and excursions - this was perhaps a subjective view based mainly on audience reactions, newspaper reviews and how the cast felt about it (what better measures?). The report by the NODA representative, which reinforces the view that this was a success, can be seen on the Society's website (www.readingops.co.uk). In this Henry Hawes describes the show as one of the finest Pinafores that he has seen in a long time, well cast, beautifully dressed, well staged together with brilliant choreography - oh, and chorus members and principals made an excellent sound with a good balance of voices. We are delighted to learn that the show has been nominated for the NODA London Region Dorothy Lawson Gilbert & Sullivan award 2007/2008, and we have been asked to supply a suitable photograph for use on the cover of the August edition of the London edition of NODA News.

On a more material side it can also be reported that the show was a financial success when it returned a surplus of £4,360. This was down to good audience attendance - our target of a 50 per cent capacity audience for the week was nearly achieved (actual figure was 46 per cent). The fact that Gilbert & Sullivan shows, being out of copyright, do not require punitive royalty payments helped of course.

SHOW NEWS - DIE FLEDERMAUS

Not all the principal parts were cast when auditions were held at St Peter's Church Hall on **SUNDAY 16TH MARCH 2008**. The candidates successful on that day were:

Rosalinda Eisenstein	.....	Maggie Preston
Adele	.....	Susannah Brooksbank
Prince Orlofsky	.....	Jennie Gumbrell
Ida	.....	Rebecca Finch
Doctor Falke	.....	Keith Lawrence
Frank	.....	Iain Whittaker

At subsequent auditions the remaining principal parts were cast as follows:

Gabriel Eisenstein	.....	Daniel Powell
Frosch	.....	Kevin Gingell
Dr Blint	.....	Adrian Tang
Alfred	.....	Tom Gingell

We were delighted to welcome Henry Hawes and Toby Cruse as visiting members of the audition panel; in particular thanks go to Toby who was able to pass to some members who auditioned helpful hints on how their performances could be improved. And in prospect it is hoped that Toby will be able to join us again to provide a workshop for members who might wish to attend.

"SPOTLIGHT" CONCERT

Congratulations everyone, Reading Operatic Society certainly pulled out all the stops on Sunday [13th April] for Geoff's memorial concert. It should be a fantastic advertisement for the upcoming show "Die Fledermaus", everyone looked great, glamorous ladies, well turned out gentlemen - altogether a highly professional performance (even with the books!).

Special congratulations to Maggie and Suzannah, both sang beautifully. There was also a certain John Lawes (who is he again?) who entertained in his inimitable style with a rendition of The Hippopotamus Song - what a performance. Jill's talent was evident with The Linda Butler School of Dancing's performance in which some of our younger ROS members took part. What about those scrumptious little teeny ones with their teddies?

I think you will agree that the evening was a great success, as yet Joyce hasn't received the final figure raised for the Cardiac Fund but I am sure it will be substantial.

Congratulations also to David Parsonson who organised and arranged the evening. I know that he was frustrated at times due to the indecision of several societies who couldn't make up their minds what they were going to do, and soloist cancelling at the last minute.

He did not have an easy time but in the end he managed to put together a terrific evening's entertainment without any 'moments'; he was the personification of courteous behaviour! Well done David.

Also, congratulations go to Raymond Burton who entertained throughout the evening - not an easy task to keep things flowing smoothly. Well done Ray. Tanya Pratt also gave a stunning performance (love the frock Tanya), many congratulations.

Yvonne Maynard

NEXT SHOW

The Committee has decided that the Society's next show will be Irving Berlin's musical "Annie Get Your Gun". This will be performed at The Hexagon between 3rd MARCH and 7 MARCH 2009.



CHARITY COMMISSION NEWS

Section 72(1) of the Charity Act 1993 provides that certain classes of persons are disqualified from being elected to be Trustees of a Registered Charity. These are people who:

- (a) are under 18 years old,
- (b) have been convicted of any offence involving dishonesty or deception where that conviction is unspent,
- (c) are undischarged bankrupts, or
- (d) have previously been removed from trusteeship of a charity.

Because Officers and Committee Members of the Society's Management Committee are also Trustees of a Registered Charity it is for Members who seek election at the forthcoming AGM to one of these positions to make a declaration that they are not disqualified from being a Trustee. That way the Society can be satisfied that its activities are within the law.

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Charities were early casualties of the Chancellor's budget in which the standard rate of income tax was reduced from 22p to 20p in the £. This gesture meant that the amount of Gift Aid which charities could reclaim on contributions/donations made after 6th April 2008 would be reduced from 28p to 25p in the £. And charities overall would lose some £79 million a year.

However the good news is that a stay of execution has been given by the Chancellor, Alastair Darling, who has said that there will be a reprieve of three years while a new system is worked out during which time tax relief can still be claimed as if the standard rate had not been changed. So, if you pay income tax and you haven't filled in a Gift Aid form, see our Treasurer straightway.

SHOW LEVY - DIE FLEDERMAUS

Paying the show levy for Die Fledermaus also provides confirmation that you are committed to doing the show, so, if you have not already done so, you should make payment to the Membership Secretary as soon as possible.

This reminder note carries a wealth warning - if payment is not made before **31st MAY 2008** the discount of £5 ceases to be available and the full levy of £40 is payable. Payment made after **30th JUNE 2008** attracts a penalty of £10. A member not paying the show levy by **31st JULY 2008** will be unable to perform in the show.

SPRING JUMBLE SALE

This event on Saturday 15th March was well attended, and thanks go to everyone who participated either by providing jumble or by giving up their Saturday morning to help on the day. The outcome was a net £309 to Society's funds.

WHAT'S ON

Advance notice that **OPERA AT BEARWOOD** will be staging Giuseppe Verdi's "A Masked Ball" between 8th and 12th July (except Thursday 10th) at the Bearwood Theatre, Wokingham.

For tickets email alan@operaatbearwood.org.uk



Unfortunately, the timing of the issue of this newsletter means that even the last night of the **SHINFIELD PLAYERS' THEATRE'S** production of "Godspell" will already have passed. But you have plenty of time to make arrangements to see their next production, "The Ghost Train" a thriller written by Arnold Ridley, in their theatre in Whitley Wood Lane, between 4th and 7th June 2008. We are told that they have recently redecorated the foyer to give it a fresh and clean feeling when entering the theatre.

Box Office 0118 926 7135.



WOODLEY LIGHT OPERATIC SOCIETY will be the first group in the south of England to perform Boosey & Hawkes' new version of the original 1858 Jacques Offenbach's "Orpheus in the Underworld" at the Kenton Theatre, Henley-on-Thames between 10th and 14th June 2008 to celebrate their 40th anniversary. No ticket bookings can be taken at the theatre until one week before the show, but for advance ticket sales bookings you may call 0845 5213459.



Between 2nd and 7th June, **THE MASQUERADE THEATRE COMPANY** will be performing "Titanic - The Musical" at The Hexagon, Reading. Tickets from The Hexagon Box Office, 0118 960 6060.



THE GREENHAM COMMON TRUST is presenting Puccini's much loved opera, Madam Butterfly, at Newbury Racecourse on Saturday 28th June 2008. The nationally recognised touring opera company, Opera Box, brings best and most loved operas to audiences at open air performances. Opera lovers are invited to bring their own picnic rugs/seating and refreshments. Gates open at 5.30pm for the performance which starts at 7.00pm. Tickets are only £6 (£3 for discounts) and are available from Newbury Corn Exchange's Box Office - call 01635 522733.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Annual subscriptions became due on 1 January 2008 for the year, unfortunately there are still a few members who have yet to pay - are you one of those?

CONCERT AT ARBORFIELD FETE

It is planned that the Society should put on a concert on the evening of **21st JUNE 2008** at the Arborfield Village Hall as a culmination of their day when the village holds its annual fête. This is an ideal opportunity to promote the Society and its shows, as well as raising funds. Tanya Pratt will be the MD for this concert and it is hoped that members will be able to support it. There is a list on the notice board at rehearsals to add you name to; alternatively give Yvonne a ring.

NODA SUMMER SCHOOL

Places are still available on the Contemporary Drama, Directing, Youth Theatre, Stage Combat, Stage Lighting, Stage Sound and BTEC Technical Skills courses at this year's Summer School which takes place at Loughborough University from 4th to 11th August 2007. To book a place contact NODA on 0870 770 2480 or book online at www.noda.org.uk

FUND RAISING DAY

at

12 Sevenoaks Road, Earley, Reading

SATURDAY 14th JUNE 2008

MORNING COFFEE & BISCUITS 50p

10.30am - 12.30pm

AFTERNOON TEA & BISCUITS 50p

2.30pm - 4.00pm

EVENING MEAL £5.00 *

7.30pm - late

(Includes choice of wines, beers, soft drinks etc.)

CAKES, PLANTS, BOOKS, JIGSAW PUZZLES,

BRING-AND-BUY BRIC-A-BRAC,

GREETINGS CARDS, TOMBOLA &

RAFFLE TICKETS ON SALE ALL DAY

PLEASE COME AND BRING A FRIEND

*To assist with the evening catering arrangements, please notify in advance (where possible) if attending the evening meal -Tel: 0118 926 7135