

Noises Off

From the Editor's desk

When you read this, Pajama Game will be upon us and hopefully we will be playing to appreciative audiences.

When July's newsletter went to print I was unaware that the finale of *The Pajama Game* on Saturday 26th September would also see the end of the partnership between our Musical Director/Producer and the Society and, although it was possible to include an insert in the newsletter when it was distributed, nothing was said in the newsletter itself. So although it is now "old news" I would like to take this opportunity of paying tribute to Jill and John who for so many years have contributed so much to the reputation of the Society and to say how sad we are that this partnership should have come to an end. So how did this happen?

Even before the decision was made to limit our appearance at The Hexagon, and faced with recurring substantial financial losses on our productions, the Committee had decided that a more innovative show, with a proven track record of audience appeal, should be explored. It was with The Hexagon's enthusiastic support that *Disco Inferno* was selected as our Autumn 2010 show. Recalling that in the past Jill had indicated that she would produce whatever show the Society chose, the Committee was disappointed when, invited to produce *Disco Inferno*, Jill felt unable to accept the invitation.

Iolanthe had already been chosen as the Spring 2010 - following the tradition of alternating musicals with operettas - and the decision only to make one week a year available to the Society's meant that The Hexagon would not be available. An alternative venue had to be sought urgently and thanks are for sure due to the Committee for its efforts in securing the Salvation Army Hall so that a programme of two shows a year could be maintained. Confident that Jill and John would lead the production team for this operetta the Committee was surprised and disappointed when they were informed by Jill and John that, if invited to be Producer and Musical Director, they would be unable to accept.

And this was followed by a formal letter from Jill and John that, after *The Pajama Game*, they would be unavailable to accept any invitation to be Producer and Musical Director for the Society. Jill has since spoken to members when she indicated that she felt that *Disco Inferno* needed a younger person and that in any event they were looking forward to a rest.

Something of an end of an era then; after appearing twice a year for 40 years in The Hexagon we shall only be there once

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

a year in future; after 40 years we shall be playing before an audience in a new environment; after an association of more than 40 years we are to lose our Producer and Musical Director. But I'm sure that members will rise to the challenge and support the Society through these changes. I wish Jill and John well in whatever venture they propose and hope that they will not lose contact with the Society

Brian Veale

100 CLUB

The 100 club opened its new cycle with a draw for **JULY 2009**. The winners were:

1 st prize of £20	Keith Bulpitt	No. 98
2 nd prize of £10	John Burch	No. 94
3 rd prize of £5	Mrs D Adler	No. 95
4 th prize of £5	Wilma Robertson	No. 55

The winners of the **AUGUST 2009** draw were:

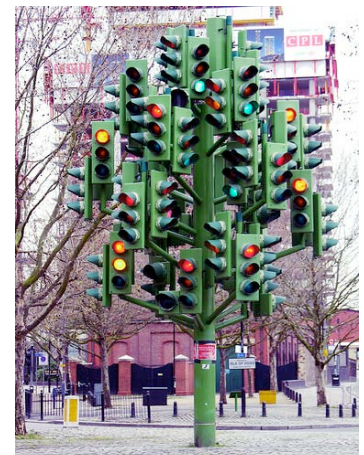
1 st prize of \$20	Tony Slevin	No. 70
2 nd prize of £10	Eddie Bessant	No. 82
3 rd prize of £5	Steve Druce	No. 49
4 th prize of £5	Mrs R Moore	No. 51

The winners of the **SEPTEMBER 2009** draw were:

1 st prize of £20	Helen Eastwood	No. 91
2 nd prize of £10	Barbara Rust	No. 99
3 rd prize of £5	Molly West	No. 30
4 th prize of £5	Mrs E Dyer	No.101

IS IT MY TURN TO GO NOW?

Is it a tree? ... Is it a modern sculpture? ... Is it an early Christmas decoration? ... No, it's a set of traffic lights seen at Canary Wharf, London. (Ed's note: this is better in colour, see the website).



CATCHING UP WITH THE NEWS

MANY HAPPY RETURNS to Phil Elliott who celebrated his birthday last month; **MANY HAPPY RETURNS** on the occasion of other birthdays celebrated in September to Eddie Bessant (21st), Mark Williams (22nd) and Molly West (25th).

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WELCOME to new members Liz Kessell and Rachel Toland.

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WELCOME to new patrons Mrs G Fricker, Mrs J Hyndman, Mr S White and Mr R Wootten.

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FAREWELL TO SIDE-STAGE AND MANY THANKS to Rosemary Wigley whose invaluable assistance as prompt will come to an end after *The Pajama Game*.

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BEST WISHES in her new home to Eileen Walton.

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BEST WISHES to Maggie Preston's partner who is recovering after a heart by-pass.

CONCERT AT EARLEY ST PETERS

Members will wish to know that the Society's share of the donations received from the audience at the concert on 2nd July 2009 which has been donated to the Duchess of Kent Hospice amounted to £650. A cheque for this amount was presented to Mary Butler who received it on behalf of the Duchess of Kent Hospice during rehearsals.



TREE OF LIGHT - CAROLS

Just checking: have you put a note in your diary that we have been asked again to sing round Woodley's Tree of Light when they switch the Xmas lights on? The date - **7th DECEMBER 2009**.

SWALLOWFELD SHOW

The Society had two fund-raising stalls at the Swallowfield Show, Spencers Wood on August Bank Sunday and Monday. Thanks go to everyone who helped.

DAISY'S DREAM

Congratulations and thanks to everyone who turned out to represent the Society by singing at the Oracle, Reading to help raise funds for the charity, Daisy's Dream, and to help

publicise our performances of *The Pajama Game*. The costumes (pyjamas of course) were a wow.

CONCERT (1)

A reminder that the Society has agreed to perform a concert of *Songs from the Shows* on **SATURDAY 7th NOVEMBER 2009** in the Salvation Army Hall, Reading. Not only will this be a good opportunity to sample this new theatre in advance of the production of *Iolanthe* in the new year, but as we will be showcasing the Society to a new audience it is hoped that it will again be well supported by members prepared to participate. Hopefully everyone who is available to participate in this concert will have put their name forward already but it's not too late to do so.

First rehearsal for this concert will take place on **MONDAY 5th OCTOBER 2009** at Earley St Peter's Church Hall and will be followed by rehearsals every Monday evening up to and including 2nd November. The musical director for this concert will be Anthony Witt.

CONCERT (2)

Another reminder, this time that the Society will be teaming up with the Masquerade Theatre for a Christmas concert entitled "Deck the Hall" on **13th DECEMBER 2009** at the Concert Hall in Reading. The programme will include a selection of the best in festive song writing from Broadway Shows, Hollywood Films, Popular Ballad, Traditional Songs and Carols.

Starting at 5pm so that all the family can enjoy the seasonal music, it promises to be a sparkling festive concert. Tickets will be priced at £15 for adults with a discount of £2.50 for concession holders. Tickets will be available from The Hexagon box office, 0118 960 960 or online at www.readingarts.com

The first rehearsal for this concert will be held on **SUNDAY 8th NOVEMBER 2009**, followed by rehearsals on Sundays 15th and 22nd November and Mondays 23rd and 30th November and 7th December.

RACE FOR LIFE

Sheila Baxter writes:

"On Sunday July 19th my two daughters, Tracey and Sarah, joined thousands of others all over the country in the *Race for Life* participating in memory of their brother Duncan whom we lost to cancer last year.



They took part in their race in St Albans, joining some 36,000 others. The runners led the way, followed by the joggers then the walkers. Because they pushed my six-month old granddaughter around the course in her buggy, Tracey and Sarah, numbers 1784 and 1797, were in the last group. At the rear at the start, they worked their way almost to the front by the finish. Below they can be seen with their medals



I am very proud of them; sponsored by family, friends and work colleagues they raised around £900 between them by setting it all up on line. The family, of course, were there cheering them on."

Sheila Baxter

SHOW NEWS - Spring 2010

As members will know, despite the news that from 2010 the Society will only be allowed one week's slot in The Hexagon, it is intended to maintain our normal programme of producing two shows a year. The Spring show 2010, Gilbert & Sullivan's *Iolanthe*, will be performed in the Salvation Army Hall, Castle Street, Reading between 18th and 20th February 2010. Musical Director for the show will be Anthony Witt, an experienced musical director, singing teacher and professional pianist. Producer will be Henry Hawes who probably needs no introduction, but will be best known as our NODA representative. David Parsonson will be the choreographer.

Open auditions will be held at 7.30pm at St Peter's Church Hall on **THURSDAY 29TH OCTOBER 2009**, (not Sunday 1 November as originally indicated).. Audition pieces will be posted on the Society's website or can be obtained from the Secretary, Maggie Preston.

SHOW NEWS - Autumn 2010

Advance notice about *Disco Inferno*, in preparation for this show which will be performed in The Hexagon from 7th to 12th September 2010, a workshop will be held between 7.30-10.00pm on **MONDAY 22ND FEBRUARY 2010** in St Peter's Church Hall. It is essential that everyone intending in being in the show should attend this workshop when additionally they will have the opportunity of meeting Jeremy Tufton (Musical Director) and Mark Tizer (Producer)

Auditions will be held on **SUNDAY 28TH MARCH 2010** starting at 1.30pm in St Peter's Church Hall.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL

Did you know that nearly half of the population hasn't made a will? OK, being in the autumn of one's years does rather concentrate one's mind, but accidents and illnesses can happen to anyone at anytime. So the advice has to be, get out there and make a will so you can be secure in the knowledge that your estate goes to who you want it to . . . and no legal battles!

And while you are about it, what better way to express appreciation of something that has given you so much pleasure during your lifetime than to leave a legacy? This will help to ensure that others are able to discover and experience the same joy.

Fund-raising is vital to the Society, especially when ticket revenue is low, if it is to continue to provide the opportunity for people to sing and perform on stage. What easier way, if you wish to donate to the Society, than to make a fixed sum legacy. This can be achieved by inserting a simple clause into your will, eg

"I give to Reading Operatic Society, registered charity number 297402, the sum of £. . . . and I direct that (i) the proceeds may used for the general purposes of Reading Operatic Society and (ii) a receipt signed by a person for the time being authorised by Reading Operatic Society shall be a good and sufficient discharge to my executors".

A gift of a legacy would be deeply appreciated. And remember, any money bequeathed to the Society will be free of tax.

AUTUMN JUMBLE SALE

A date for the jumble sale has yet to be finalised, but it is hoped that there will be one on a Saturday morning in October or early November so please save all your saleable items and be prepared to help out. Venue will be, as normal, in the Church Hall.

SOCIETY'S WEBSITE

Have you visited the Society's website at www.readingops.co.uk yet? Read about the Society's history, view photographs of past shows and see the newsletters' photographs in colour.

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MY TRAVELEYES EXPERIENCE

For my first holiday "travelling solo", and in the year of my milestone birthday, I decided on a new challenge and a group holiday with Traveleyes which offers holidays worldwide to sighted and independent blind and visually impaired travellers. Traveleyes was founded in 2005 by Amar Latif who, by the age of 20, had lost 95% of his sight due to an incurable eye condition. He is now just 34 years of age and in addition to being a director and entrepreneur he is an accomplished motivational speaker on a variety of subjects including equality, diversity and world travel, and has appeared on TV in "Beyond Boundaries" which explored the levels of endurance attainable by travellers of various disabilities "roughing it" through the dense jungles of Central America. He accepts his blindness is a challenge and he is well deserving of the international awards he has received.

Out of the holiday destinations offered for 2009 I decided to book on the week's trip to Ireland. Our group consisted of 10 visually impaired (including a couple who were both blind who live in the USA) and 10 sighted, with Amar as our Tour Guide

and Joanna as his sighted assistant. We all met up at Luton Airport where Amar introduced us to the person we would be sharing a room with for the week, and who we would be with on the flight. With 22 suitcases all weighed and labelled we then divided into smaller groups to start getting to know each other. We were of mixed ages and abilities and as several members of the group had been with Traveleyes on previous trips they were keen to share their experiences with those of us who were new. Our flight took off on time and we were soon at Dublin airport and boarding the coach to travel to our Hotel where we were to stay for two nights.

Every evening we had a group meeting and were told who we would be paired up with for the next day. That meant who we would be walking with, guiding them, describing the scenery and events to them, reading the menu to them at mealtimes, and general tasks to help them enjoy their holiday.

We had a guided walking tour of Dublin city on our first morning, followed by a free afternoon when we split into groups of four or six and decided amongst ourselves what to do and see. The next day our coach took us across to Killarney where we were to spend the next five nights. Our hotel here was on the edge of the National Park and just a 15 minute walk into the town, where we went in the evenings to eat in one of the restaurants or Irish pubs and to listen to the Irish music. One of our full day excursions took us on the wonderful scenic drive around The Ring of Kerry to see the mountains, lakes, and beaches. We also visited Blarney Castle, where several of the group climbed the 100 stone steps up the tower to kiss the Blarney Stone. Further trips were to Muckross House and Gardens, a cruise on Loch Lein, and a horse-drawn "jaunting car" ride through the Park to Ross Castle.

The week went very quickly and we were soon packing our cases and heading for Kerry airport for our flight back to Luton where we all said our goodbyes. As Amar thanked us all his partings words were "The sooner we go home, the quicker we can all come back on another holiday!!"

Joyce Bamford

UK SONGWRITING CONTEST 2009

Congratulations to Howard Timberlake who was a semi-finalist in two categories of this year's UK Songwriting Contest.

The UK Songwriting Contest is an international annual song writing event that was formed with the Brit Trust in conjunction with a number of international song writing and music industry bodies to encourage and promote the art of song writing and the discovery of new talent. It's probably true to say that no other song contest comes close in generating media attention and in getting publishing and recording deals for new songwriters. All entries are very carefully examined by experienced music industry professionals, when song writing ability rather than performance or production is judged.



Howard put forward entries in three separate categories; it was his two entries in the Folk/Country category, entitled "Eye Ballet" and "Red Lace & Wine" that reached the semi-finals.

SHOW NEWS - PAJAMA GAME

Sleeping on the job? How is that possible with such a bevy of beauties?



Commiserations to Jenni Simmonds who had to pull out of the show due to ill health, we wish her a speedy and full recovery.

We are pleased to welcome Abi Holland who has gallantly stepped in at short notice to play the part of Poopsie.

We have previously paid tribute to all those volunteers who give up their time to support members when they perform on stage - without people to help with back-stage, lighting, properties and wardrobe the show could not go on. It's opportune therefore to give a special vote of thanks to Rosemary Wigley who, after this show, will be giving up the difficult and stressful task of prompt. Tucked away in her corner it is easy to be overlooked, but there are many in the Society who will remember that they have been grateful for her interventions which have oiled the wheels on stage. It was last year that Rosemary indicated that she felt she had reached the time when she should stand down after many years in the post. We wish Rosemary well and look forward to seeing her in the audience in the future - we shall give her a wave.