

WORCESTER OPERATIC & DRAMATIC SOCIETY

Behind the Scenes
Summer 2020

A Message from the President

Ann Hasnip

Dear Members, I do hope that you are all keeping safe and well during this difficult time. As you will all know, sadly, we have had to cancel our AGM, which, under the circumstances and following a membership vote via WODS' first ever virtual Special General Meeting, was the only way forward given the Government restrictions put in place. We are, however, sharing the Treasurer's report that would have been shared at the AGM for your perusal and I would like to thank our Treasurer Peter Brown for all his work behind the scenes and his continued support for the Society during this difficult time. Peter has kindly agreed to stay on as WODS Treasurer for the time-being, for which the Committee and I are very grateful indeed.

I would also like to provide, for your interest, a brief overview of some of the other activities of the Society over the previous 12 months during my term as President. 2019 was an interesting and challenging year for many reasons. The year sadly saw the loss of some loyal members and long-standing ex-members, many of whom have been leading lights of the WODS family. Joyce Brown, Richard (Adrian) Swerhun, Robert Wilson, Sonia Armstrong, Gladys Blackler and John Raybould are all sadly missed and our love and condolences go to their families.

One of my first roles as President was to attend the Cathedral for Worcester's Civic Ceremony in June 2019. This was a beautiful and inclusive ceremony, and it was an honour to attend to represent WODS. Thank you to Rachel Price for joining me.



Some members worked very hard on publicity throughout the year. On a rainy day they performed at Worcester Carnival, literally 'Singing in the rain', together with WODYS members who were promoting their production of 'Back to the 80s'. Some members also performed at the Pride celebrations in September. Thank you Jennifer Chow for organising these events. Martin and Sheila Boniface set up a series of Sing and Social evenings for members on Monday evenings for those not in a show, which was great fun for those who attended.

Following the financial report for 2018-19 and the concerning financial situation we found ourselves in, the Committee actively pursued a raft of cost efficiency and fundraising schemes during 2019-20. This included, in September, a fundraising table top sale at St. Mary's Hall from which we made £409.

'Singing in the rain' in October was both an artistic and financial success. The audience loved it and I'd like to thank everyone involved with this production. We are also grateful to Rachel Sedgley, who organised a matched fundraising award for our show raffle from Barclays Bank, which resulted in a donation of £750 to the Society.

NEWS AND OTHER GOSSIP

As a tribute to the late Sonia Armstrong, herself a Past-President of WODS and a long serving member, we held a memorial concert in November which raised £1,070 for the Society. It was a magical evening and a real tribute to a very special lady. I quote Margaret Clarke, 'Sonia was Worcester's own Doris Day!!'

Our Christmas Social evening was another success with Carol singing, entertainment and a raffle raising another £107 towards WODS funds.

As previously reported in the newsletter, Jennifer Chow, our previous Secretary, unfortunately decided to resign from the Committee at the end of December and we are very grateful for all the hard work and dedication that she gave to the Society. I am also very grateful to a number of other Committee members for picking up the core duties of the Secretary role between them as we were unsuccessful following a call-out to members at finding a replacement for the role. This has of course placed extra burden on a small group of committee members, but I thank Ann Turner, Chris Holloway and Mike Astles for stepping in for now.

And so that brings us to 2020, and what a year this has turned out to be so far! It started sadly again with the loss of many WODS family Members both past and present. Janey Barton, Arthur Bancroft (a well-loved orchestra member for many years), Trevor Guest, Steve Cooke (Cookie), John Crayford, Paul Bellamy, Jane Sedgley and Edie Glover. Our love and condolences go to all friends and family, they will be sadly missed, and indeed any others known to members who I have not been made aware of personally.



In February we joined in with the Arboretum light festival, creating a display in the front window of St. Mary's Hall advertising our then upcoming production of "Kipps". This was followed at the end of February by a great Quiz evening with fish 'n' chips – with thanks to Chris Holloway for running the quiz, and to Rachel Price for organising the food.



Last year WODS joined the Worcester Lottery scheme (see more later in this newsletter), and we're grateful to Martin Boniface for spearheading this for us. If members or friends buy tickets for £1 a week you will have the opportunity to win £25,000!! For each £1 ticket bought, WODS will receive 50p towards our funds. Many members have won prizes already so please join to support us and possibly win a lovely prize!

NEWS AND OTHER GOSSIP

During this challenging time your Committee has continued with frequent teleconference meetings and I would like to thank Chris Holloway for organising these meetings and assuming the responsibilities of Chairperson on my behalf. I would also like to thank all committee members for their continued support of your Society. So much work is going on behind the scenes and everyone is working to ensure that WODS and WODYS emerge from this current challenging situation as strong as possible. This also includes those non-committee members who also work in support in so many ways. Peter Brown continues as our Treasurer, Bruce Wyatt as our NODA rep and also looking after car park rentals for St. Mary's Hall, Ian Crohill for organising ticket sales and Lesley Hart who looks after the Society's archives.

The WODYS Committee also continue to work hard for our youth group. "Back to the 80s" in August 2019 had us toe tapping and brought back many musical memories. It is easy to forget that they are young people we are watching! WODYS highly acclaimed cabaret group continued to delight their audiences on their tour of care homes, WIs, church groups and other locations. Thanks must go to all the hardworking WODYS team who continue to provide our youth members with life changing experiences.

Rehearsals for "Kipps" were well on the way and it was looking to be a wonderful show. Members of the cast were loving rehearsals and raring to go! All scenes were set and all that was needed was to polish performances. With five weeks to go the news was devastating for the company and the Society when, sadly, and as you all know, due to COVID



and the associated restrictions placed upon us all as a result we had to suspend all of our rehearsal activity, and have since had to postpone our entire forward programme of productions. You can read more about the full plans for our productions later in this newsletter.

For the first time, the 2020 NODA awards were announced by a virtual meeting. We received 3 nominations, and successfully picked up two of the three awards! I would like to congratulate Chris Holloway and the entire cast and production team associated with WODS production of "Oklahoma!", which picked up the award for best Musical Theatre Production in District 10. Congratulations also to David Humphries, his production team, and all of the youngsters in WODYS' cast of "Back to the 80s" as they picked up the Best Youth Production Award. Congratulations and thank you to all involved. Both awards were thoroughly deserved. It was a fantastic achievement and I am so proud that we have so many talented members.

This is only the third time in the history of WODS, since 1892, that we have had to suspend rehearsals and performances. The first two times being WW1 and WW2! We will come back fighting!

My thanks to all our dedicated members who work tirelessly for our Society, both on and off stage. We will continue to follow Government guidelines and publish more updates for members as soon as we can. For now though, stay safe everyone, and my best wishes to you all.

Ann Hasnip, WODS President

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Since the beginning of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the subsequent restrictions in the UK, WODS Committee has been working hard and has been carefully considering the impact on our Society's numerous activities. The WODYS Committee has similarly been considering the impacts upon our Youth Section. We have had to suspend all rehearsal activity until further notice, and you will no doubt have heard that the Swan Theatre has had to temporarily close its doors.

Both Committees have been able to continue to meet by teleconference on a number of occasions, initially more frequently than normal as we grappled with the impact of this challenging situation. The WODS Committee sent a letter to all members on 3rd April 2020 to explain the changes to WODS' forthcoming productions having reviewed the latest public health guidance, and in consideration of the length of time current and future restrictions may be in place. You will no doubt appreciate that there have been many complex aspects to consider, not least for our productions in trying to ascertain theatre availability, performance licencing, set & costume hire, production team availability and our ability to meet to rehearse.

In summary, the Committee confirmed the following:

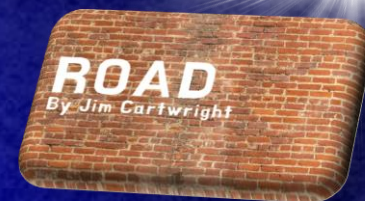
"Kipps : The New Half a Sixpence Musical"

It is unfortunately not possible to stage the show in April 2020 as we had hoped and been working towards. We appreciate that this will be very disappointing and disheartening for Everyone involved, and the Committee shares in this, however we clearly have no choice. Having reviewed the availability of the licence, set, costumes and confidence in our ability to re-start rehearsals, we have been left with no option but to defer the show to our 20th to 24th April 2021 slot. Chris Hooper (Director) has contacted everyone involved in the production (cast and crew) to establish availability to continue being a part of this show, and the Committee will publish further information about when we may be able to recommence rehearsals once public health advice allows and the ongoing restrictions are lifted.



WODS AGM 2020 – The AGM was originally due to take place in April 2020. Following a virtual SGM to amend the Society's constitution, new clauses were successful added by unanimous vote to allow for the WODS Committee to defer the AGM in such exceptional circumstances until such time as the prevailing situation allows. A revised date for the AGM will be announced as soon as public health advice allows.

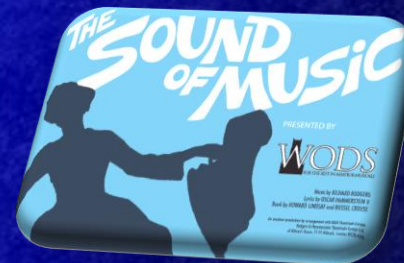
"Road" – This play was due to be staged at St. Mary's Hall from 18th to 20th June 2020. Again we have had to realistically review our ability to hold rehearsals and, having consulted with Toby Edwards (Director), it is hoped to move the performance to a later date once the public health situation allows.



WODYS production of "Shrek" – The WODYS Committee have taken the decision to delay "Shrek" until 3rd to 7th August 2021. See the WODYS News pages in this newsletter for further information.



"The Sound of Music" – Given the low probability of being able to reliably commence rehearsals for this production, the Committee decided to take the same approach as "Kipps" – a 12 month delay. This means that "The Sound of Music" will hopefully commence rehearsals in May 2021 and be performed from 19th to 23rd October 2021.



WODS production previously scheduled for Spring 2021 – Following the membership voting on show choices, the Committee had selected a show for this performance slot, however the COVID-19 pandemic preventing us from announcing the choice. "Our House" has been selected, and will hopefully be performed in the April 2022 slot.

WODS production previously scheduled for Autumn 2021 – The Committee had been discussing a show choice for this performance slot, however given the amount of movements we have had to make to existing shows we have decided not to select any further shows at this stage. The next performance slot for a show to be selected would now be October 2022, and the Committee will continue discussions on this show choice in due course, and in the light of any further mitigations we may have to take if the COVID-19 situation causes ongoing disruption to the Society's activities.



TICKET EXCHANGES & REFUNDS

Message to Members, Friends and Audience Members

(as published on www.wods.co.uk and on our WODS Community Facebook page):

Due to current public health advice in relation to COVID-19, WODS has currently suspended rehearsals for our production of "Kipps - The New Half a Sixpence Musical" – which we were due to perform in April 2020.

Subject to the changing public health situation, we now hope to stage the production in April 2021 as long as we are able to recommence rehearsals in time to prepare for those performance dates, and that any remaining Government restrictions allow for the theatre to open.

If you had already booked tickets for the 2020 show dates, we would first and foremost encourage you to exchange these for the equivalent new date in 2021, or one of the other performance dates. If this is not your preference for now, then both WODS and WorcesterLive would be happy to provide you with a full refund for the ticket value until such time as you wish to re-book to see our production when it takes to the stage.

If you booked your tickets through WODS then please email tickets@wods.co.uk to exchange/refund your tickets. If you booked your tickets through WorcesterLive then please contact the Box Office for an exchange/refund.

We hope to see our friends and audiences again soon! Stay safe everyone!

The
Swan
Theatre
Worcester

WODS
FOR THE BEST IN AMATEUR MUSICALS
PRESENTS

KIPPS

THE NEW
HALF A SIXPENCE
MUSICAL

20th - 24th
April 2021

WODS Ticket Manager

tickets@wods.co.uk

noda
Not a Drama Association

Follow us on Facebook @wods1892
and Instagram @wodsworcester



Box Office 01905 611427

Based on the H.G. Wells novel "KIPPS: The Story of a Simple Soul" and the original musical by Beverley Cross and David Heneker

Original Songs by David Heneker • Book by Julian Fellowes • New Music and Lyrics by George Siles and Anthony Drewe

Orchestrations by William David Bohn • Co-Created by Cameron Mackintosh

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Music Theatre International (Europe)

All authorised performance materials are also supplied by MTI Europe www.mtishows.co.uk

NODA AWARDS 2020



Congratulations

In amongst all the continued challenges of 2020, WODS are delighted to announce some good news!! Following the NODA Awards for District 10 held virtually on 31st May 2020, WODS production of "Oklahoma!" in April 2019 has won the Best Musical Theatre Production Award, and WODYS' production of "Back to the 80's" won Best Youth Theatre production!

Congratulations to both Production Teams, all the cast members involved in both shows, and everyone else who contributed to these fantastic productions in anyway behind the scenes. A fantastic achievement for everyone, well done! We shall just have to wait to celebrate these successes in person!

WODYS News

Well it's exceedingly good news from WODYS in these difficult times. We picked up the Best Youth Award for "Back To The 80's", which was staged in July, 2019, at the National Operatic and Dramatic Association (NODA) virtual Regional Conference Award's Ceremony. We are truly delighted and proud to have won - very well done and many congratulations to all concerned!

David Humphries (WODYS chairman) said: "I am extremely proud of the youngsters and everyone associated with Back To The 80's. It was truly a great team effort." WODYS has won this award in our region on four previous occasions - Oklahoma! (2009); Footloose (2014); Les Misérables (School Edition), (2016); and Seven Brides for Seven Brothers, (2018).

Sadly, WODYS next show "Shrek The Musical" has had to be postponed for a year due to the coronavirus pandemic, however WODYS now intends to stage the production from Tuesday 3rd to Saturday 7th August 2021 instead, and it promises to be bigger, better and greener than ever!

This is the first time in the 38-year history of WODYS that the annual show has had to be put off. Whilst this is very sad, having considered all the other options and based on the latest Government advice and social distancing measures WODYS committee felt it was best and the only option.

Most of the amazing cast of 60 youngsters, aged 8 to 18, will hopefully remain the same. It is also hoped that the production team, band and volunteer helpers will all be back as soon as possible. Rehearsals will resume when the Government advise it is safe to do so.

The WODYS Committee has also decided it is safer to cancel WODYS annual winter cabaret for 2020/21, which usually goes on the road around residential/care homes, hospices, WI's and churches and usually starts rehearsing in September. Any venue or group which has booked a visit from the cabaret will be offered a booking the following year. Already five of those cancelled have come back to book for the winter of 2021/22.

Worcester Operative & Dramatic Society Youth Section

Book and Lyrics by
David Lindsay-Abaire

Music by
Jeanine Tesori

Originally
produced on
Broadway by
DreamWorks
Theatricals and
Neal Street
Productions

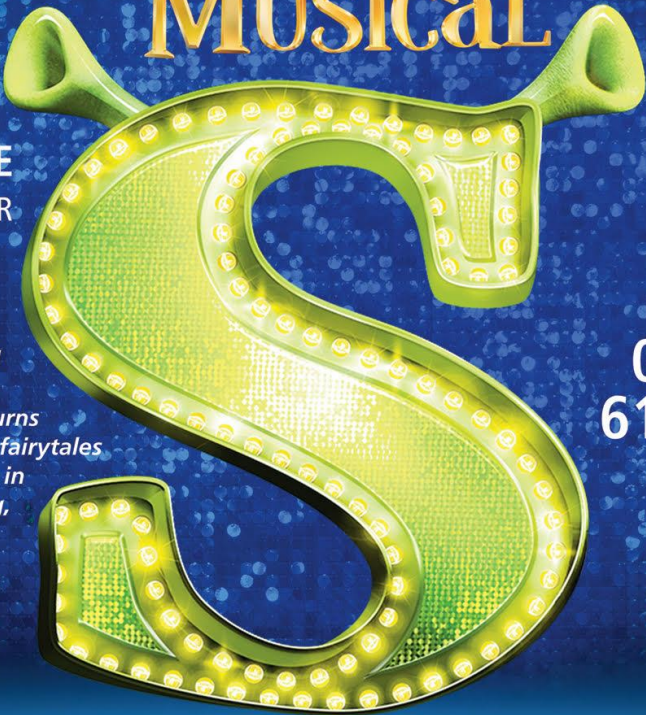


PRESENTS

SHREK The MUSICAL

SWAN
THEATRE
WORCESTER

*Hilarious and
spectacular
production turns
the world of fairytales
upside down in
an all-singing,
all-dancing,
must-see
musical
comedy*



3rd to 7th August 2021

This amateur production is
presented by arrangement with
Music Theatre International (Europe)
All authorised performance materials
are also supplied by MTI Europe
www.mtishows.co.uk

noda
Be inspired by amateur theatre



For Ticket
orders
please call

BOX OFFICE
**01905
611427**

• WODYS News •

WODYS winter cabaret has completed its successful 2020 tour of residential and care homes, church groups and children's groups in February 2020. One of the highlights of the run was performing at the Sky Lounge, Floor 14, Cripplegate House in St John's, with panoramic views over the city of Worcester. The audience was very appreciative saying; "What a great show you put on, enjoyed by us all. It certainly got us 'Singin in the Rain' over the weekend".

Hardly had the words been spoken when members of the cabaret group found themselves battling against the elements to reach venues to perform when Worcestershire was hit by floods and rain. In true professional style 'the show went on', although we did have to cancel one venue cut off by the water.

The cabaret featured 12 youngsters aged 12 to 15 and had a balance of singing, dance and movement. It was produced and choreographed by former WODY Lydia Healy, who is now a singing teacher, married, and with a toddler, Izzy, who became the cabaret mascot, attending performances and joining in the fun.

WODYS would like to thank the venues which donated money at the performances. It is being split between WODYS and our chosen charity, Bonterre – a part-time alternative education provider on a 15-acre small-holding at Top Barn Farm which helps youngsters who are struggling to stay at school for a variety of reasons including autism, ADHD or because of complex backgrounds.

The cabaret had songs from the West End and Broadway including Cabaret (Maybe This Time); Hamilton (You'll Be Back) and The Waitress (Opening Up). We even slipped in one of the songs from our next show, Shrek, (Who'd I Be). Well done to all the youngsters involved, and to the adults supporting them.



WORCESTER COMMUNITY LOTTERY

Fund raising with Worcester Community Lottery – article by Martin Boniface

WODS is delighted to announce that we are now participating in the Worcester Community Lottery. This simple and fun way of supporting WODS, comes with the chance of winning one of a number of weekly prizes ranging from £25 to £25,000.

How does it work?

Worcester Community Lottery is an exciting weekly lottery that raises money for good causes in Worcester. All good causes supported by the lottery will benefit Worcester and its residents. Play the lottery, support Worcester - it's that simple!

Each ticket for the lottery cost just £1 per week, that's just £4.34 per month for each £1 ticket purchased. Each ticket has a 1 in 50 chance to win a prize each week, with a top prize of £25,000! That's a better chance of winning than the National Lottery or the Health Lottery!

Each ticket consists of 6 numbers and each number will be between 0 and 9. The draw takes place every Saturday night when a 6 digit winning combination will be picked. Prizes will be given to players with tickets that match the first or last 2-6 numbers from the winning combination. Match all 6 and you win the JACKPOT!

How does WODS benefit?

From each £1 ticket sold 60p will go to good causes in Worcester! When purchasing a ticket(s), nominate WODS as your local good cause. By doing this, 50p from each ticket is paid directly to WODS with the remaining 10p going into a general fund which supports good causes in Worcester.

To put this in perspective when you play the National Lottery 25% goes to good causes – the Worcester Lottery has more than DOUBLED the ticket percentage that goes to good causes. This really is a WIN-WIN

If just 50 people each buy a £1 ticket and nominate WODS as their good cause, a whopping £1,300 is generated each year for WODS and a further £260 for other good causes in the area. Each ticket has a 1 in 50 chance of winning a prize.

What next?

To find out more about the Worcester Lottery or to buy tickets then visit the website www.worcesterlottery.org

Please mention this to friends and family members and ask them to join in and nominate WODS as their chosen good cause. Thanks and good luck!



• TRIBUTE TO STEVE COOK ("COOKIE") •

Many of you will have been saddened to hear of the recent death of Steve Cook. Judging by the large turnout of people for the burial in a meadow outside Usk and the wake at Perdiswell Young People's Leisure Club, Steve had a huge number of friends in the Worcester theatre family who loved and admired him.

Steve was a very clever man who, over the years, turned his hand to a great many things – R&D engineer at Brinton's Carpets, a carpet and car salesman, a drummer, the owner of a transport company and most recently the proprietor of a theatre set hire business – Stage-A-Show. In all of these enterprises he brought his customary energy and enthusiasm, together with a sound business brain. Steve made huge contributions to the local theatre scene in Worcester through his involvement with Midland Musical Theatre Group (MMTG) now Worcester Musical Theatre Company (WMTC) which has raised tens of thousands of pounds for charities.

Steve was a member of WODS Committee for several years and stage-managed several shows for us including "The Full Monty" in 2008. This was memorable for me, not only for being a great show to be involved in, but also for the after get-out party at Steve and Jacque's house was one of the booziest and riotous events I can remember (vaguely). I think that Dave Humphries and I consumed all of Steve's stock of Jack Daniels that night having polished off the beer.

As a Stage Manager myself, I have always used Steve as my bench-mark, which I unfortunately have rarely been able to live up to. He had a nice blend of charm and ruthless firmness. A typical example was when an over-keen chaperone was standing in the wings watching her protégé onstage. Steve explained politely that she was standing in line with where a truck was about to be brought on stage. When this approach failed to shift her, he explained in more forceful terms that "This truck will be coming through here and if you don't get out of the blooming way, it will flatten you!" This approach worked.



In recent years, as WODS Production Manager, I have had many business dealings with Steve's scenery hire business. A trip down to Cwmbran to visit Steve to discuss sets was something I always looked forward to, as I was guaranteed several hours of Steve's hilarious stories about the crazy things people do in amateur theatre. Steve was always prepared to spend time with his customers explaining the pros and cons of various options and making sure they got a set which would work in their venue. This sometimes involved explaining that a 20 foot high flat would not fit into a theatre with a roof height of 15 foot or that cloths needed to be hung on a bar and to be flown upwards or swiped sideways when not used in a scene!

No tribute to Steve would be complete without a mention of the One-Off Performance Society (OOPS). This group was formed as a direct result of Steve's vision of staging a performance of "Titanic- The Musical" to coincide with the 100th Anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic in April 2012. Although over 100 people from across many theatre groups in Worcester joined OOPS and contributed to the show, it was Steve's vision that drove the whole project forward and his enthusiasm which motivated the group.

In the end, the show was an artistic and financial success raising over £10,000 for the RNLI. Few will forget that very moving final night of the show which coincided almost to the hour with the sinking 100 years earlier.

So, with Steve's passing, we have lost a great man with a big and generous heart. Steve was lucky to have a great family round him and I look forward to working with Jacque and Hayley as they carry their business forward. Goodbye Cookie!

Mike Astles

Dates For your Diary & Other INFO

Date TBC:
WODS AGM 2020 - St. Mary's Hall

Date TBC:
WODS present "Road" (a play by Jim Cartwright) - St. Mary's Hall

20th to 24th April 2021 :
WODS present "Kipps : The New Half a Sixpence Musical" - Swan Theatre

3rd to 7th August 2021
WODYS present "Shrek the Musical" - Swan Theatre

19th to 23rd October 2021
WODS present "The Sound of Music" - Swan Theatre



Wardrobe and Props Hire

Wednesday nights at St. Mary's Hall
between 7pm - 8.30 pm or other times
by special arrangement.

Costumes Hire
Christina Humphries
07799 055 513
or Mary Beechey
07939 579 725

Props Hire
Ann Turner on 07900 911 295
or Mike Astles on 07980 056 615



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