

MUSICAL NOTES

Number 17
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The Newsletter of Newtown Musical Theatre Company

Exciting November!

We Back the Phantom and Sing in the Rain!!

On the 20 November 2004, fourteen members provided the backing group for Peter Karrie during his show *Peter Karrie and Friends at Theatr Hafren*.

About one and a half rehearsals and we were on stage supporting one of the most successful of musical theatre performers. We were treated as professionals with our own stage dais and six microphones. Peter proved to be a charming man as well as still a fantastic singer. He was very friendly with us and, although he was still suffering the effects of a dose of 'flu, insisted we had this photograph taken with him.

Andrew, Gwiryon and Kat Bond; Chris and Mike Clarke; Emma and Vivica Flynn; Sue Hill; Gaz and Karen McMurdo; Jeremy and Ruth Thorp; Frances and Joanna Western joined in with Mr Karrie in 'One Day More', 'Do You Hear the People Sing?' and 'Jesus Christ Superstar'. We were also given our own slot in which we sang 'If I Loved You' and 'Sunrise, Sunset'.

It turned out to be a very special evening and we did NMTC proud. Well done to all concerned.

Exactly one week later, NMTC was well represented again, this time in Cardiff Bay. Twenty Company members (plus two family members - Metheven Bond and Nigel

Western) participated in the 2,000 strong massed choir at the open-air concert *Hymns and Arias*. This was part of the weekend celebrations to mark the opening of the Wales Millennium Centre (WMC) - a magnificent building and a very exciting occasion.

We were conducted by Wales's foremost conductor, Owain Arwel Hughes. Inevitably, being Cardiff and Wales, we got a good soaking just before the concert and while we were singing 'Singin' in the Rain'! However, the *hwyl* was strong and nothing dampened our spirits. It was a real party atmosphere. Our group had a marvellous position: 'to the front of centre stage'! The concert was followed by an absolutely stupendous firework display over the WMC itself and over the Bay.

NMTC was represented by: Mary Ambrose, Andrew Bond, Kat Bond, Peggy Bound, Chris Clarke, Mike Clarke, Dorothy Crozier, Tony Crozier, Maureen Cullen, Emma Flynn, Vivica Flynn, Liz Green, Irene Harbron, John Harbron, Ian Hogg, Mara Musciano, Ruth Thorp, Jackie Titley, Frances Western, Joanna Western.

We sang the hymns 'Blaenwern', 'Cwm Rhondda', 'Rachie', 'Calon Lan' and 'Tydi a Roddaist'. From the musicals, we sang

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Above: Members of NMTC with Peter Karrie, Theatr Hafren, November 2004
Right: Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff on Hymns & Arias night, November 2004

Members' Evening 29th June 2005

The committee has decided to experiment with taking part of a rehearsal evening as a 'members' slot'.

This will be an evening once per month, when an hour will be devoted to things of interest to all members and patrons, rather than just the current production.

The first of these is scheduled for 29th June 2005. We are open to suggestions for how some of this time can be spent, but our ideas at the moment are along the lines of ... open discussions on topics of interest to the company, workshops or short talks on aspects of drama or music, social time for chatting to people, 'Party Pieces' style entertainment, etc, etc. If anyone has any suggestions, please let me know.

One of the items we hope to include on the first evening will be a '1920s fashion show' organised by Marjorie and Kat. We are also planning a short musical quiz.

The idea is that we can involve particularly those members who are not in the current show, and also patrons and crew, as these people otherwise tend to lose touch with the company unless they are actively involved in rehearsal.

For the first one, the company will provide some snacks and refreshment. For subsequent ones (to prevent us having to charge) we would like people to bring with them suitable refreshments to share.

I hope that as many people as possible will come on 29th June. If you are not involved in the rehearsal that day, please turn up at 8.30pm for our first members' night.

Jeremy Thorp



The Boy Friend

Production Team

The Production Team for *The Boy Friend* is as follows:-

Director	Kat Bond
MD	Sarah Banks
Assistant Director	Jackie Titley
Choreographers	Maureen Cullen Jackie Titley Joanna Western Kat Bond
Production Manager	Jeremy Thorp
Stage Manager	Lorraine Thomas
Wardrobe	Marjorie Meredith
Make-up	Peggy Bound

Non-Availability Forms

You will have been given a form for you to indicate when you will NOT be available to rehearse *The Boy Friend*. Please fill these in and return to Kat as it can be very difficult to plan rehearsal schedules otherwise.

The Cast

The parts that have been cast at the time of writing are as follows:-

Hortense	Vivica Flynn
Maisie	Ruth Thorp
Dulcie	Lisette Wright
Fay	Emma Flynn
Nancy	Emma Breese
Polly Browne	Siân Stephenson
Marcel	Ryan Lane
Pierre	Tom Barton
Madame Dubonnet	Chris Clarke
Bobby van Husen	Andrew Bond
Percival Browne	Mike Clarke
Tony	Richard Jones
Lord Brockhurst	Michael Wakeman
Lady Brockhurst	Jane Breese
Daisy	Melanie Hill
May	Jessamy Ashton
Lolita	Karen McMurdo
Pepé	Gareth McMurdo
Gendarme	Tony Crozier

That Certain Thing Called *'The Boy Friend'*

from the Director

So why choose to direct *The Boy Friend*? As with *Salad Days*, I have a soft spot for the show, and for similar reasons. It is the same age as me (starting in embryonic form in 1953 - to be launched officially in January 1954). It was my first ever show as MD, having previously arranged (shhh!!) and performed extracts of its score as incidental music for a 1920s play.

I also co-directed the production and, as is the case with many assistant directors, saw alternative solutions and interpretations which I would have loved the chance to try out.

A fizzy, light hearted piece of nonsense - a bit of froth - but nonetheless very neatly put together. A spoof of the highest order - so close that it is perfectly acceptable in its own right - no prior knowledge necessary. It is, however, this element of pastiche that appeals particularly to me - both musically and dramatically.

How to emphasise the ridiculous nature of the 20s musical comedies, while at the same time drawing on the zany academic student-style footlights humour of the 1950s Sandy Wilson (even if he was at Oxford!) - that is the challenge.

Every song (and, I understand, every scene) in *The Boy Friend* is a parody of one or more from the 1920s. Many I have worked out, but some still elude me. I am working on a list of 'parallel' numbers - give me time!

The plot itself is also a parody of three shows: *No, No, Nanette*; *Irene*; and *The Mikado* (you just can't get away from the influence of G&S, can you?!)

So 'get on the dance floor ... get in the swing ... now is the time for having a fling' in this cheeky little number ... *Boop-a-Doop Boop-a-Doop Boop-a-Doop!*

Kat Bond

Introducing our MD *Sarah Banks*

"I was brought up in a small mining village near Atherstone in Warwickshire, where I lived until going to college in Birmingham to study Orthoptics. Having qualified, I worked in a number of hospitals around the country from Ashford (Kent) to Bangor and a few in between.

After trying the big bad world for a few years, I decided to chuck it all in and return to university, Cardiff this time, to study Optometry. Once qualified, I then worked in Nuneaton (Warwickshire) and finally

moved to Churchstoke in September 2003. Since then I have got married and we have started major work on the house. Every room is in some kind of chaos; 6 months on we are getting towards the 'making good' phase but we still have a long way to go!!!!

Musically, I have played the clarinet for 25 years and also dabble in piano and saxophone and, very occasionally, flute. Since moving to Churchstoke, I have joined Ffonic and love playing the baritone sax there, but I still retain musical roots with Staffordshire Senior Wind Band in Tamworth, a wind band that I joined whilst still at junior school.

Other musical experiences include a big band style dance band, a trad jazz band and a military woodwind band in Ashton-under-Lyne (near Manchester). All have taught me a great deal about musical styles and the wealth of talent that is out there.

As if that isn't enough, when I have a few moments to spare, I am out in the three-quarters of an acre garden trying to keep my head above the grass (and inevitable weeds)."

From the Production Manager

Most production aspects of *The Boy Friend* are well in hand. The set will be home-constructed and Kat has drawn up plans that are effective but straight forward. We would appreciate the help of some of you to put the set together. Please come and talk to me if you can help. Jackie has again allowed us to use her barn and we will be hoping to do the work during weekends over July and August.

The costumes will also hopefully all be made or borrowed. We can always make use of extra people who are able to wield a needle and thread. If you can lend a hand please talk to Marjorie.

The photoshoot is fixed for the weekend of 9th/10th July, perhaps in Llanbedrog, where there is a suitable beach with beach huts. The main photoshoot will be on Saturday afternoon, but some people are intending to make a weekend of it and to camp overnight. Please can everyone let Kat or Marjorie know whether they will be able to be there so that costumes can be organised.

Another date for your diary - there will be a weekend rehearsal on 17-18th September (10am-4pm Saturday, 2pm-5pm Sunday). Can you please put this in your diary now, so that you keep the days free.

Finally, looking ahead to the programme, can you all think about extra adverts that you might be able to obtain for us. Please let Karen know whatever you can find. The cost will be £25 per advert.

Jeremy Thorp

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'Climb Every Mountain', 'You'll Never Walk Alone', 'Thank You for the Music', 'We'll Gather Lilacs' and 'Singin' in the Rain'. Verdi's Chorus of Hebrew Slaves from *Nabucco* followed and the evening was rounded off by a rousing rendition of the Welsh National Anthem, 'Hen Wlad fy Nhadau'.

The nearby Chinese restaurants did a roaring trade!

As a possible follow up to the above, the Welsh Amateur Music Federation (WAMF) has responsibility for hosting up to 200 of the one hour performances in the foyer of the WMC. Your Committee is minded to offer for NMTC to do a slot (probably on a Saturday) providing we felt we could get a suitably well-rehearsed programme in place. Needless to say, we would need to be spot on!



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Hymns & Arias November 2004: (1) NMTC preparing to rehearse in the afternoon (are they always eating?); (2) & (3) NMTC members about to start 'Singin' in the Rain'; (4) Owain Arwel Hughes conducting the band (seen on a screen for a better view); (5) fireworks across Cardiff Bay after the performance; (6) Chinese banquet after the fireworks (eating again!).

Out with a Bang

as Fiona in Salad Days 2002



Or three bangs, to be precise! *Oklahoma!* was Gwiryon's last show on stage with NMTC. After 13 shows and various other concert performances - never having missed a rehearsal, except due to illness, holidays or exams, Gwirly is leaving to go to university to read English.

Gwirly began her affiliation with NMTC when it was still Newtown Operatic Society in Carousel (1997), as one of the Snow children - having been asked by Irene if she would be interested in helping out.

She has always delighted in pointing out to those who assume that she tagged along because her Mum was involved, that it was actually the other way round. It was another year and a half before Kat became MD (and a year after that before Andrew and Metheven joined the company).

Gwirly has played a very significant part as the first regular youth member of NMTC in recent years, bringing others in to join her. As well as playing bridesmaid three times, maid three times, débutante four times, having three different groups of siblings and four different mothers (but only one father), she has had several named rôles over the years (and one or two near misses) - the two most important being Minnie in *Annie Get Your Gun* and Fiona in *Salad Days*, where amongst other things she managed to tap her way through an entire dance number in stilettos - no mean *feet* obviously! Up until Easter she was one of three founder members of the FridayTappers to have kept on tapping. She has also been Librarian and book distributor of NMTC for the past three years.

So - what next? Involvement at university? Possibly. Playing sax in show orchestras? Possibly. Helping with ideas and designs? Certainly, for this show at least. Writing a show? Who knows! One thing is certain - we'll see her around from time to time, show to show!

Also leaving NMTC for pastures new is Sarah Gardner, who intends to read Law at university. Sarah has been with NMTC on and off since autumn 2001, having enjoyed G&S from an early age (due to an operatic aunt). Sarah has played the lead role of Yum Yum in *The Mikado*, also Fiona in *Salad Days* and Gertie in this year's *Oklahoma!* (that laugh still haunts us!). She has also contributed to tap and other dance in all the shows she has been in.



as Gertie in Oklahoma! 2005



Sophie Grosvenor, who joined us for *Oklahoma!*, is also leaving to go to performing arts college in September.

We wish all three girls all the best for their futures on and off the stage, and hope to see them between terms now and again.

Oklahoma!

We are all still reeling from the success of our last production of *Oklahoma!*. 'Fans' still stop me to say how much they enjoyed it and I'm sure that's true for lots of you.

The first performance of *Oklahoma!* ... is it really 12 years ago? ... was our first foray into musicals as opposed to G&S and operetta. It was also the first one that Chris and Mike performed in as members of NMTC.

John Harbron directed it and it was obvious then that the Company had moved successfully to include Musicals.

Well, this production was quite different, and showed the enormous strides we have made as a company. Same story, different cast, chorus and director, hired scenery, experienced back stage crew - all contributed to this success. Not that this all comes without a financial cost. The audience do appreciate it, however, and doesn't it feel good to be on stage knowing how good it looks?

May the fun stay in the society as we continue to give of our best, while being involved in our hobby. Here's to our next show *The Boy Friend* and to await the positive comments in October.



Gaz prepares for his role of Curly!

Jackie Tittley

Trip to London to see *Guys And Dolls*

A new revival of our Spring 2006 show *Guys And Dolls* is just starting in the Piccadilly Theatre in London. The Committee would like to think we could run a trip to see a Saturday matinee performance. If anybody, Committee member or no, would like to organise it, I would be delighted if you would liaise with me.

Mike Clarke



Theo Owen

We were sad to hear that Theo Owen had passed away after a long illness, which she fought with a

smile, oxygen and a scooter.

Theo was one of our very talented accompanists for a number of years. She was always very supportive of the company and full of laughter when she appeared from behind the piano.

Behind the scenes she helped many of us prepare music. Once you had run the gauntlet of her dog at home, many happy hours were spent singing around her grand piano.

It was Theo who gave up her time to help the seven members who sang in the 1000Voices at the Albert Hall. Not only did we represent NMTC but, it seemed, the whole of the Western Area. We were proud to be there and Theo helped us prepare.

Unfortunately Theo became ill and had to have portable oxygen, which didn't dampen her spirit. She still helped when she could and then along came her invalid scooter. Look out everyone where she was around on that!

Music lives on in her family, with Eira her daughter a very talented french horn player. Theo was also very involved with the Newtown Male Voice choir and I'm sure they also remember her fondly, as we do.

Jackie Tittley

NODA Raffle

The NODA Raffle is going on for the next few months. It's the first raffle NODA has held for four years and the profits are all ploughed back into developing amateur musical theatre. Tickets are £1. Even if you have bought one, try to buy another every so often. It would be nice to sell all our tickets (over 100!).

A reminder of the prizes: £3,000 cash; weekend break in London with two nights in a 4* hotel, dinner and tickets to see the musical *The Woman in White* (starring Michael Crawford); his and hers rotary watches; The Pavarotti Edition (10 CD box set).

Mike Clarke

NMTC Committee

Chair	Jackie Tittley
Vice Chair	Tony Crozier
Secretary	Mike Clarke
Treasurer	Jeremy Thorp
Business Manager	Peggy Bound
Publicity Manager	Karen McMurdo

Committee Members:-

John Harbron
Mark Ward
William Worth

Non-Committee Posts:-

Membership Secretary	Ruth Thorp
Librarian	Gwiryon Bond

Party Pieces IV

Another highly successful "Party Pieces" event was held on December 18th, when many of our members, friends and family performed for the rest of Company at the Little Theatre.

There was a wide range of numbers, many sung, but also instrumental and spoken, with the performers quite literally varying in age from eight to eighty.

This was also our Christmas event and there was a very good buffet supper laid on after the performance by Jackie and her team.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this possible, especially those who sorted everything out before hand, and of course to Marjorie and NADS for letting us use the venue again.

Ruth Thorp

Diary 2005

2005	
29 June	Members' Evening
8.30pm	
9 or 10 July	Photoshoot for <i>The Boy Friend</i>
17 & 18 Sep	Rehearsal weekend for <i>The Boy Friend</i>
14 & 15 Oct	<i>The Boy Friend</i>
2006	
28 Mar-1 Apr	<i>Guys & Dolls</i>