

MUSICAL NOTES

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The Newsletter of Newtown Musical Theatre Company

Guys And Dolls A Message from your Director

What can I say about Guys & Dolls? I must confess that I knew little about it until I was asked to consider directing it - I vaguely remembered a film with Marlon Brando and Frank Sinatra - so I had to do some research and I was helped by reading about the latest revival in the West End, when every critic in Daily and Sunday Newspapers, as well as Theatrical Magazines, cited it as their "favourite musical ever" - largely based on the "definitive" production by the National by Richard Eyre in 1996, although the current production was praised for its vitality and the stunning performances of Sarah and Adelaide.

The more research I did, the more I became mesmerised by these Damon Runyon characters representing the demi monde of New York, beautifully matched by Frank Loesser's score.

It will be a real challenge to establish these characters and create the atmosphere. We will have to work very hard on the technique, and it also calls for a very different approach to chorus work, since all members are very much players in the action and it will be exciting to work on this aspect of the show.

So I ask myself what can we give to the show to make it special? I think our teamwork will lift it and make it memorable and I am looking forward to the challenge.

Marjorie Meredith

Weekend Rehearsal

The weekend rehearsal for *Guys And Dolls* is being pencilled in for 4th and 5th March 2006. Please put these days in your diary, because it is really important that everyone in the cast attends these rehearsals.

Saturday 4th March 10am to 4pm

Sunday 5th March 2pm to 5pm

The rehearsals will be at the Methodist Church Hall (to be confirmed).

Llani Panto

Following slight technical hitches*, the Llani Drama Group pantomime has been rescheduled for 19th, 20th and 21st January 2006 at 7.30pm at Llani Community Centre. Several NMTC members are involved, including Karen McMurdo as assistant director, Frances Western, Jane Breese and Kat Bond. Tickets will be available on the door. [*The lighting control box caught fire.]

Guys And Dolls Production Team

The Production Team for *Guys And Dolls* is as follows (so far) :-

Director	Marjorie Meredith
MD	Hugh Stephens
assisted by	Sarah Banks
Production Manager	Lorraine Thomas
Choreography	Marjorie Meredith Kat Bond
Props	Carol Braithwaite
Make Up	Peggy Bound

The Cast

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

Nicely-Nicely Johnson	Gareth McMurdo
Benny Southstreet	Jeremy Thorp
Rusty Charlie	Ian Hogg
Sarah Brown*	Ruth Thorp
Arvide Abernathy	Jackie Titley
Harry the Horse	Mark Ward
Lt Brannigan	Phil Evans
Nathan Detroit	Mike Clarke
Miss Adelaide	Chris Clarke
Sky Masterson	Andrew Bond
Joey Biltmore	Tony Crozier
Agatha	Peggy Bound
General Matilda	Kat Bond
Big Jule	Tony Crozier

Hot box dancers:

Emma Breese, Emma Flynn, Vivica Flynn, Annabel Grosvenor, Hannah, Harriette Lane, Karen McMurdo, Siân Stephenson, Bethany Weston, Lisette Wright

See the next newsletter for other parts...

(*without an 'e')

Oklahoma!

This Write Up of our March 2005 show by NODA rep Kaye Ikin appeared recently in the NODA Western Area News

"Talented husband and wife team Gareth and Karen McMurdo took to the stage as Curly and Laurey and brought to life once again the story of country life in the outback. They both performed the well-known Rodgers and Hammerstein songs well, as did all the cast members.

Andrew Bond as Will Parker and Ruth Thorp as Ado Annie both brought out the comedy in their characters. The Persian peddler Ali Hakim - Mike Clarke made the most of his role as the lecherous travelling salesman. Dressed in his outrageous suit and with his expressive facial expressions, he left the audience in no doubt as to his feelings. Chris Clarke was the motherly Aunt Eller and the infectious laugh of Gertie Cummings - Sarah Gardner will be remembered.

The evil Jud Fry was suitably portrayed by Tony Crozier and during the smokehouse scene with Curly a problem arose with a gun, which failed to fire on cue, and they covered this very well. Most of the audience would have been unaware of the dilemma.

The setting and performance of the dream ballet sequence worked very well and the sets and costumes were good throughout, although I wondered why Laurey was dressed in bib and brace overalls for her first entrance*. The chorus and dancers gave good support to all principals and the cameo roles were well performed.

Thank you for your invitation and welcome. The production was well-received by the audience and it was good to hear the well-known songs again. I shall look forward to my next visit."

(* There is a simple answer to this point. The idea was originally from the acclaimed National Theatre production in 2000, directed by Trevor Nunn, which later transferred to Broadway. In this

revival version, Josefina Gabrielle played Laurey wearing dungarees and a check shirt in Act 1 Scene 1. We liked the idea and 'borrowed' it.)

Plas Cae Crwn Concert

17th April 2005

Lots of the members of NMTC took part in a special celebratory concert for local residential home Plas Cae Crwn on the afternoon of Sunday 17th April 2005. We played alongside many of the other local groups including the Newtown Male Voice Choir.

We performed simple staged versions of a selection of numbers from our recent shows: 'The Farmer and the Cowman' (*Oklahoma!*), 'Me And My Girl' and 'Love Makes the World Go Round' (*Me And My Girl*), 'It's Too Darn Hot' (*Kiss Me Kate*), 'Madrigal' (*The Mikado*), 'If I Loved You' (*Carousel*) and 'One Day More' (*Les Misérables*, featured in *Magic of the Musicals*).

Members' Evening

On 29th June, the first members' evening was held. This was intended to be an opportunity for the company to meet and do things that can't be done satisfactorily at normal rehearsals, such as talk, meet with patrons and members who are not in the current production and have some fun.

On our first such evening, we were treated to a grand fashion show, based on the period of the show being rehearsed (*The Boyfriend*). Kat Bond obtained and organised a large number of costumes which were modelled by (mostly) willing participants. Kat also provided a very interesting and amusing commentary and much fun was had.

Following this, Mike Clarke introduced a Musical Quiz: 20 questions to test our knowledge of Musicals and Operettas. Everyone was divided into pairs and all had a go. Champion of the quiz was Ruth and David, who won a box of chocolates.

A spread of food and drink was available throughout the evening.

I would like to thank especially Kat and Mike for the time they put into making the evening such a success. I would also like to organise another sometime, the problem being that it requires a rehearsal evening to be given up, which is easier said than done. However, I will try to make another happen sometime.

Jeremy Thorp

Welcome to New Members

The Boy Friend

We were very pleased to welcome ELEVEN new members to the stage in Theatr Hafren for *The Boy Friend*. This is definitely a record and meant that over a quarter of the cast were débutants.

Taking principal roles were: Roger Banks (Alphonse), Emma Breese (Nancy), Ryan Lane (Marcel), Tom Barton (Pierre), Lisette Wright (Dulcie).

Taking supporting roles were: Jessamy Ashton (May), Alex Ayers (Elsie), Catherine Davies (Francie), David Drew (Jacques).

Taking chorus roles were: Karen Relihan, Bev Southall.

We hope they all enjoyed the experience and that as many of them as possible will be returning to take part in *Guys And Dolls*.

Guys And Dolls

We are also pleased to welcome several new members for *Guys And Dolls*. As new people are still joining us as this newsletter is being written, a list of names will appear next time. However, we would like to say a particular 'welcome back' to Phil Evans, who has joined us to play Lieutenant Brannigan in *Guys And Dolls*. For those who are relatively new to NMTC, or those with limited memory spans, Phil was last in *Anything Goes* playing Billy Crocker. (Those who were there on the Saturday night may remember the trouser incident with some amusement!)

Visit the Revamped NMTC Website

Karen (last year's Publicity Officer) and Ruth have been busy redesigning the NMTC website over the summer. This includes a complete new look for the site and loads of new information. Roger Banks was then elected to the new post of Website Editor at the AGM in October.

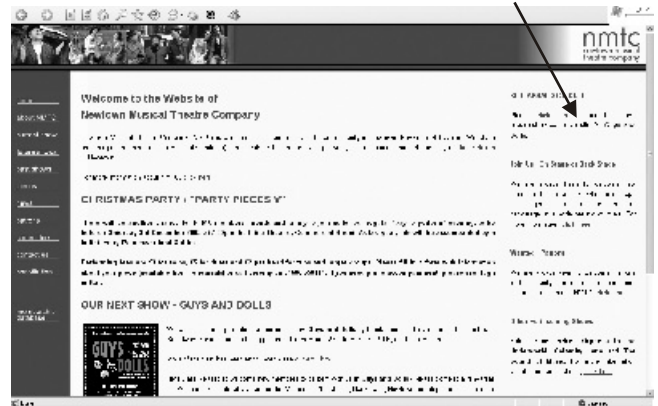
There is also a link to the membership database which gives names, telephone numbers, addresses etc. You will need a password to get into this bit of the site (see Ruth) - the rest of the website is free access.

Importantly, we are now keeping an up to date rehearsal schedule on the website - either follow the link on the top right hand corner of the home page, or go to the 'current show' page.

Please note that some parts of the website are still being worked on, in particular the photo galleries and information about past shows. These will be added over time. (Any volunteers to scan and resize photos for the early shows would be appreciated!) However, a lot of information and photos for recent shows are already there for you to see.

So, please take a look at
www.newtownmtc.co.uk.

Click here for
up to date
Rehearsal Schedule



the home page of the new look NMTC website at
www.newtownmtc.co.uk

Party Pieces V

On Saturday December 3rd, NMTC members, family and friends gathered at the Little Theatre for the FIFTH installment of 'Party Pieces' - our now regular opportunity for socialising and informal performing of music, dance and drama.

We again had a wide variety of acts - solos, duets and group items.

As well as many vocal numbers, we also had a dance number (Melanie demonstrated her Irish dancing, choreographed by herself) and several poems and recitations.

Notable group numbers included the ladies who offered us "I'm a Little Christmas Cracker" and the (mostly) ladies of the "Mediæval Dæmes" who performed "Erthe Upon Erthe" and "Gaudete" (after the "Mediæval Bæbes", as seen in Theatr Hafren in October).

Who also will forget Peggy Bound and Mike Clarke's special revision

of that well known song from *The Sound of Music*: "I am 60 going on 70 [or 20]"? Or Kat Bond and Chris Clarke's rendition of Rossini's cat duet "Duetto Buffo Di Due Gatti"?

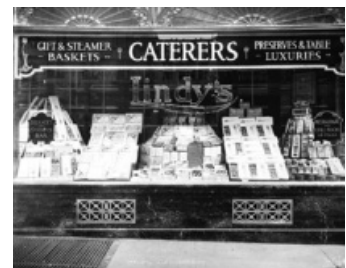
Thank you to Dave Peters, who was Master of Ceremonies for the evening, and to Kat Bond and Hugh Stephens who between them accompanied most of the numbers (although we mustn't forget Ian Hogg's wonderful, if one-fingered, foray into accompanying!) Thank you also to Hugh for lending us his electric piano for the evening.

Many thanks to Jackie for organising a wonderful spread of food and drink, plus the several members who also brought along contributions. I think a good evening was had by all.

Finally, thank you to the Newtown Amateur Dramatic Society for letting us use the Little Theatre again, and especially to Marjorie for all her help and time in our preparations for the evening.

Lindy's

There are several references throughout *Guys And Dolls* to "Mindy's Restaurant", as well as to their considerable sales of cheesecake and strudel. Indeed, in the film version of this show, several scenes take place inside Mindy's.



Mindy's is a very thinly veiled reference to a real Broadway restaurant called Lindy's, which author Damon Runyon (see overleaf) frequented nightly.

Lindy's, a delicatessen-style restaurant, at 1626 Broadway in Manhattan, was opened in 1921 by 33-year-old German immigrant Leo "Lindy" Lindeman.

NODA Summer School 2006 and Area Bursaries

Please see the leaflet on the noticeboard for information about this year's NODA Summer School (Loughborough, 5th to 12th August 2006).

Anyone wishing to go to the NODA Summer School MUST apply as soon as possible. If you can only go subject to being awarded an Area Bursary, and you are not awarded a bursary, you will get your deposit back.

If you would like to apply for a bursary, you should ring Derek Grattidge, Area Councillor, on 02920 705684 and ask for an application form. The form MUST be returned to Derek by 31 January 2006.

There are three bursaries worth £200 each available this year.

Damon Runyon

Damon Runyon (1884 - 1946) was a newspaperman and writer, who created the stories on which *Guys And Dolls* is based.

These short stories portray the world of Broadway in New York City that grew out of the interwar Prohibition era. They feature gamblers, petty criminals, actors and gangsters; "Nathan Detroit", "Big Jule", "Harry the Horse", "Rusty Charley" and "Dave the Dude" to name but a few; these characters from that certain social class are now referred to as "Runyonesque".

The stories are written in a very distinctive vernacular style, which is characteristically written entirely in the present tense and without contractions.

Guys And Dolls is based primarily on two of his stories: "The Idyll Of Miss Sarah Brown" and "Blood Pressure"; some characters are drawn from various of his other stories.

He was born in Kansas as Alfred Damon Runyan, but grew up in Colorado (from where his character Sky Masterson also came). His father and grandfather were newspapermen and he started in the trade under his father in Colorado. In one early newspaper job, the spelling of his last name was changed from 'Runyan' to 'Runyon' - this stuck for life.

Runyon moved to New York City in 1910. He had a passion for sport, especially boxing and

baseball, and for ten years he covered the New York Giants and professional boxing for the *New York American*. His editor dropped the 'Alfred', and he thus became 'Damon Runyon' for the rest of his career.

His best friend was mafia accountant Otto Berman, who appears in several of Runyon's stories as the character "Regret". Gambling was a common theme of his stories and Runyon was a notorious gambler himself.

Runyon frequently contributed sports poems to the *American*, wrote short stories and essays and was a baseball columnist for many years. He posthumously received the J.G. Taylor Spink Award and entered the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1967.

Runyon's first wife was Ellen Egan and they had two children - Mary and Damon Junior, but they broke up in 1928 over rumours that Runyon was linked with a Mexican girl he had first met in 1916 and discovered once again in New York, when she came looking for him. Called Patrice Amati del Grande, she became his companion after he separated from his wife and they married after Ellen died. Patrice left Runyon for a younger man in the year he died.

A heavy drinker and smoker, he died in New York City from throat cancer in 1946. The Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation, established in his honour, was set up to fund promising young scientists in the field of cancer research.

A Note from the Editor

After several years and 17 issues of 'Musical Notes' where I have been assistant to the Secretary, I have now been officially appointed 'Newsletter Editor' at the cabinet reshuffle at the AGM in October.

So now, officially on my own behalf - and of course on behalf of all the members and patrons of NTMC - I would like to ask you firstly to let me know if you are happy with the newsletter and whether you would like to see any changes.

Secondly, and perhaps repetitively, could everyone please try and contribute to the newsletter! It makes it much more interesting than everything being written by me! Thank you!

Ruth Thorp



Damon Runyon

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