

MUSICAL NOTES

Number 26
August 2009

The Newsletter of Newtown Musical Theatre Company

Chairman's Report

Well yet again a very positive year so far, thanks to the commitment of everyone in the Company. We have had quite a change in membership recently with some of us with long membership being joined by others who can, in their turn, assure a continuation of the Company. We have over the years earned a lot of respect and 'notoriety' for our performances on stage as well as respect from the Theatr staff and Newtown community at large. We were even recently named as a community group who were valued by the Theatr when they were applying for Arts Council grants.

Some of you will be aware of the brilliant reception we had when we performed for the French Twinning Group, so much so that their Mayor suggested that we went to France to perform. Chris and Mike may have their work cut out giving us French lessons do you think?! They certainly enjoyed Chris doing her MC in French, thanks Chris. Watch this space, we may be taking the mayor up on his offer!

Cinderella is well under way with Bev, Karen and Emma at the helm - I hope you are all having a good time, as well as working hard to do just what they ask of us. Jo is putting us through our paces

with her choreography: there are a lot of us to manage, all with varying abilities. You wait until you see what she has some of the youngsters doing!

Fran is continuing her fight with cancer and I know she is very pleased with the support she gets from NMTC. Keep smiling Fran and we'll see you at your bar-b-que when you give us the nod!

Can I on your behalf wish Sarah and Jonathan every happiness when they tie the knot on 12th September. May you live in close harmony for many years to come.

We were sorry to hear on the other hand (ha ha) that Kat has broken her wrist. Not the best for a pianist eh! We wish you a speedy recovery.

Sarah and Roger Banks are expecting their first baby around the time of the *Cinderella* performance; Peggy hopes it won't be during the performance as she is not sure what the role of child protection officer will be! Congratulations to you both, do you think we should have a guess the name and weight competition?

Well here's to *Cinderella* and continuation of a thriving NMTC.

Jackie Titley
CHAIRMAN

Performing at the Wales Millennium Centre

In their latest newsletter, Tŷ Cerdd (formerly the Welsh Amateur Music Federation), are inviting affiliated societies to perform on the Glanfa Stage at the WMC during December 2009, January and February 2010. The Glanfa Stage is a performance space in the public area of the WMC, which means that the performances are informal in atmosphere. Members of the public can come and go as they please during a performance. Applications have to be in by the end of August. Performances are usually between 1 - 2 pm and 6.15 - 7.15 pm, depending on the start times of shows.

Before the Committee make enquiries about available time slots, we wish to gauge how many of the Company's members would be interested in taking part, as we would need to have a reasonably balanced 'choir' as far as voices go. Because of the distance we would have to travel, we could only perform at weekends, which presumably are the most popular times. If you are interested in performing could you please let Jackie or Ian know as soon as possible.



NMTC at the opening of the Millennium Centre (27th November 2004)

NMTC Events 2009

On Thursday 29th January 2009, we presented a programme of musical numbers for an afternoon concert for the **Thursday Club** at the Methodist Church Hall. The event included solos and ensemble numbers and seemed to be enjoyed by the audience. We were presented with a cheque for £200 for our efforts, which was much appreciated.

Thank you to Jackie and Ian for accommodating us for rehearsing at Outhwaite and to Kat for accompanying us.

On Saturday 16th May 2009 we performed several semi-staged numbers from musicals at the Monty Club as part of the **Twinning Concert** which celebrated 10 years since Newtown was first twinned with the French town of Les Herbiers. The venue was packed with locals and their visitors from France, who enjoyed a medley of tunes from the musicals performed by Newtown Silver Band (including an impressive *vocal* rendition of 'Hello, Dolly!' ... we hope some of them might join us?!) and then watched the NMTC performance.

Thank You - Fundraising

Please can we thank the helpers who made the food for the stop at Devils Elbow on the Rotary Charity Cross Wales Walk.

We actually had a great time and our cakes especially were very well received. Jill and Dave's camper van was much appreciated when needing to make cuppas for some of the walkers. We did have a bit of a panic after buttering ten loaves, when Janette said she had read in the paper that the High School were catering at Devils Elbow! A dramatic pause in the proceedings to check ...

As mentioned in the Chairman's report on page 1, Chris was our MC and carried out her role in French, which seemed to be appreciated by the audience. Numbers included 'Consider Yourself at Home', 'Oom-Pah-Pah' and 'Pick a Pocket or Two' from this spring's *Oliver!* (with solos reprised by Elliot as Oliver, Hannah as Nancy and Mike as Fagin, supported by Freya and Jodie). When the pickpockets picked Fagin's pocket, they pulled out huge 'handkerchiefs' in the red-white-blue for France on one side and red-white-green for Wales on the other side.

Thank you to Sarah and Kat for rehearsing us and to Sarah for accompanying us.

On Saturday 11th July 2009 we were pleased to take part in another concert at the **Methodist Church**, this time a

celebration of 30 years of the local Methodist circuit.

The programme of performances included soloists and groups of singers and other performers, as well as the Bro Hafren Choir and NMTC. We had the final slot of the evening and performed some of our popular numbers from musicals: 'Consider Yourself at Home' (*Oliver!* - solo by Freya), 'Black Hills of Dakota' (*Calamity Jane*), 'If I Loved You' (*Carousel* - arranged by Ian), 'Some Enchanted Evening' (*South Pacific* - arranged by Kat). The evening was rounded off with a rousing communal rendition of 'Climb Every Mountain' (*Sound of Music*). Thank you to Wena Nutting for accompanying us on the piano and to Kat for rehearsing us.

Thank you to the stalwarts of NMTC who turn out for these extra events.



Thursday Club Concert January 2009 - presentation of the cheque

phew ... yes we were to carry on. Thank you ladies and Rhys who joined us to help on the Saturday. We were given £250 for our NMTC funds.

Thanks too to all who helped with the bag packing at Morrisons on Saturday 25th July. We made £330 in the four hours we were there, but could have done even better with more help. We will try to get another date next year now we know how generous the customers are!

Jackie



The principal roles in *Cinderella* were cast following auditions in April as follows:

Cinderella	Hannah Wilson
Step Mother	Julie Breakwell
Joy	Teresa Fawcett
Portia	Freya Rowlands
Queen	Gaenor James
God Mother	Chris Clarke
Herald	Gareth McMurdo
King.	Mike Clarke
Steward	Andrew Bond
Chef	Les Skilton
Prince Charming.	Richard Jones
Clumsy Man	Jonathan Davies
Minister	Rex Shayler

The Transformation Dancers are as follows:

Mice:

- Alice Crush
- Cathryn Jenkins
- Rosie McBeath
- Connie Rowlands

Horses:

- Jodie Breakwell
- Katy Collins
- Becky Mumby
- Jo Western

Footmen:

- Jorge Bowen
- Keri Hopwood
- Oliver Orme
- Ellen Wallis

Jackie is making enquiries at Lakeside, Garthmyl about this year's Christmas Dinner, but would be pleased to hear from anyone with other suggestions for venues.

A note from Penry:

"Chris Clarke passed on to me a very good book of interviews Placido Domingo had recorded. In the interviews he dealt with the ways in which he had worked on the many roles he played.

Kat Bond has, many times, emphasized the need to use the diaphragm correctly."

Domingo talking about *Don Giovanni*:

"Vocally I never had any problems with the role, either with his two famous arias - 'Dalla sua pace' and 'Il mio tesoro' - or with the trio, the quartet or the ensemble. Of course, by then I had begun working systematically on my singing technique, with Marta and our Mexican friend baritone Franco Inglesias, who was also a permanent member of the company in Tel Aviv. Franco had a deep understanding of the principles underlying good singing: a solid breathing technique that enables you to support the breath from the diaphragm and to sustain this support, through control and manipulation of your air intake.

"Basically it took me all of two and a half years to acquire my technique and be able to sustain the breathing in a way that enabled the voice to cut

continued overleaf ...

Diary 2009

CINDERELLA DATES

Fri 14th Aug	Costume fitting for Chorus
Sat 5th Sept	Weekend rehearsal 10am-4pm
Sun 6th Sept	Weekend rehearsal 2pm-5pm
Wed 16th Sept	Rehearsal at Theatr Hafren
Wed 23rd Sept	Rehearsal at Theatr Hafren
Wed 30th Sept	Full run through at Treowen Get In for Technical Crew
Thurs 1st Oct	Dress Rehearsal
Fri 2nd Oct	Opening night
Sat 3rd Oct	Matinée and evening performances

OTHER NMTC DATES

Thurs 13th Aug	Princess Ida video at Treowen School at 7.15pm
Sat 22nd Aug	Trip to see The King and I at Aberystwyth
Thurs 29th Oct	Concert for Thursday Club at Methodist Chapel*

*Anyone able to take part please see Jackie - your opportunity to sing a solo or duet.

The Likes of Us

As members of the Regional Committee of NODA (National Operatic & Dramatic Association), Jackie and I were invited to the launch of a previously unheard musical by Andrew Lloyd-Webber and Tim Rice, written when they were about 18 years old, called *The Likes of Us*, at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London in July 2008.

The musical, based on the early years of Dr Barnardo, has been released for performances by amateur companies which are members of NODA, for three years, before - possibly - being performed professionally.

At the launch, at which Tim Rice was present, some of the songs from the show were performed by a youth group from Essex and we were very impressed

both with the music and the group's performance - so much so that we decided to go and see the world première performance in January 2009 by the group Kidz R Us from St Ives, Cornwall.

What a good decision that was! We were stunned by the brilliant effervescent performance by over 80 kids aged from 8 to 18. Everything about the show was excellent; the music, the costumes, the set which extended out into the auditorium (oh what you can do when you own your own theatre!) as well as the enthusiastic performance by the kids. Tim Rice was extremely well pleased with the performance as well.

Then last month (July) we were invited by Lyn Emmerson to review the Welsh première of

the show, by the Llandudno Youth Music Theatre Group, for the regional NODA magazine.

The different use of the narrator made this a very different, but nonetheless excellent, performance by a smaller company with a more limited budget. Again, the music, the set and the costumes were very good. It was directed by two former members of the group.

Although the two performances we have seen were by youth groups, it is a show which can be performed by societies such as ours, as half the characters are actually adults. So it is, perhaps, something which we could consider for the 2011 Autumn Show.

Ian Hogg

The Likes of Us by Kidz R Us



... continued from page 3

through the orchestra and project to the back of the theatre. By the end of that time my diaphragm felt like a solid wall of cement on which I could lean while singing. But it takes a long time, because those muscles must become so strong that you can depend on them. Once they do, the support comes automatically. While I was in the process of acquiring it, I used to position myself against a piano and try pushing it with my diaphragm ... I also wore an elastic belt - the kind that weightlifters wear to protect their kidneys - so that I could watch and control my diaphragm's increasing capacity to expand.

"Marta, Franco Inglesias and I used to practise this for hours every day, taking turns to listen to one another. In this sense, I am self-taught. This should encourage many of today's young singers who complain there are no good teachers around any more. This is indeed a problem. Yet once you understand that a good breathing technique is the alpha and omega of good singing, you can set about acquiring one yourself. You need to be very patient, very determined and serious about what you are doing - and you need a good pair of ears, other than your own, to listen and to criticise you."

NODA Crit of *Oliver!*

The beginning of the 60s brought about the première of the blockbuster musical *Oliver!* Newtown MTC made full use of this ever-popular piece which exploited the talents of all the characters.

Discipline was evident during the first scene with the 22 children from Bro Hafren Choir singing their hearts out in the Workhouse. This set the tone



for the whole show.

Andrew Bond and Gaenor James were well matched as the morbid undertakers, Mr & Mrs Sowerberry. They brought a new dimension to their roles in a prancing rendition of 'That's Your Funeral' which I found to be macabre to say the least.

Cathryn Jenkins in the title role of Oliver completed her task with ease, whilst Jessica Breese proved a formidable Artful Dodger. I am assured Elliot Hopkins - Oliver and Jorge Bowen - Artful Dodger, who took the roles in two performances, both excelled.

The role of the villainous Jew, Fagin, was in the hands of experienced player Mike Clarke, who took every opportunity to manifest his

stagecraft. Nothing was left to chance with his interpretation of this character. His rapport with The Gang and his concern for Nancy culminated in a faultless performance.

Strong characterization from Gareth McMurdo as the ruthless Bill Sykes, his guttural accent adding much to his merciless portrayal. Superb contribution from Hannah Wilson as Nancy whose big number 'As Long As He Needs Me' was a real highlight and she kept in character throughout.

Cameo roles were well executed in every situation. Chorus thoroughly enjoyed their knees-up with 'Who Will Buy' gaining a well-deserved applause.

On the down side, I would have liked to have seen a younger and scruffier Fagin's Gang and dirtier Workhouse Kids, but this was an excellent production and all must be congratulated, including the suitably-dressed and hard-worked stage staff.

Grateful thanks to Theatr Hafren for their support and enthusiasm with this production, and to Chairman Jackie and husband Ian for their most generous hospitality and for allowing us to gatecrash your Oom-Pah-Pah.

by Lyn Emmerson, NODA

Thoughts from the Company please

Oliver! - as you all know - was a resounding success, both financially and from audience and performers' point of view. To do the show we auditioned youngsters to join Fagin's Gang, which has resulted in new younger members becoming part of the company and even more joining for *Cinderella*. Very welcome they are too. We know you must enjoy it to have come back!

However, it is a fact that younger members have a tendency to learn quicker than some of us ... ah yes, I remember those days too ... General conversation within the company has included ideas regarding how to, or if we need to, extend

the remit of the company to perhaps have a youth group. Obviously this would involve another rehearsal time and venue, more willing helpers with lots of ideas: do we put on joint productions, what is the purpose of such a group - is it to learn stagecraft? - the list is endless.

A plea then from the NMTC Committee to let us have your thoughts on the subject, in writing please, so that we can have a meeting to discuss the feasibility of such a group.

I know several members have views to express so we invite you all to share those ideas with the Committee. Please give your thoughts to Jackie, both for or against the idea.

Welcome to New Members

We are pleased to welcome to the following new members who are taking part in *Cinderella*. We hope you are all enjoying the experience!

Josephine Bowen
Kerala Erwin
Adèle Hopkins
Amy Goode
Rosie McBeath
Becky Mumby
Oliver Orme
Tony Orme

We are also delighted to be welcoming back the following - it's great to have you back with us!

Veronica Brankin
Erryl Cruse

New Year's Party

A belated thank you (because we ran out of space in the January 2009 edition of Musical Notes) to Jackie and Ian who played host to NMTC on New Year's Day 2009, when members came round to 'Outhwaite' for tea to celebrate the New Year. A lovely time was had by all, with great food and games.

Website:

www.newtownmtc.co.uk

NMTC Committee

Chair	Jackie Titley
Vice Chair	Karen McMurdo
Secretary	Frances Western
Treasurer	Ian Hogg
Business Manager	Peggy Bound
Publicity Manager	Andrew Bond

Committee Members:-

John Harbron
Les Skilton
Bev Southall

Non-Committee Posts:-

Librarian	Jill Peters
Archivist	Chris Clarke
Newsletter Editor	Ruth Hendry
Website Editor	Gareth McMurdo
Child Protection Officer	Peggy Bound

MEMBERS' NEWS

Congratulations to Karen

Karen McMurdo has gained a BSc Econ in Information & Library Studies with 1st Class Honours. She was also awarded with the Departmental Award for excellent performance at Undergraduate Level.



Well done from all of us!

Good Luck and Goodbye to Emma

Emma Breese, Musical Director for *Cinderella*, as well as chorus member/dancer, principal, MD and band member for many shows over the past four years, is leaving us next month to go to university. After taking a couple of gap years, Emma is going to Leicester University to read medicine.

Emma first joined NMTC in 2005 for *The Boy Friend*, playing the role of Nancy (one of the 'perfect young ladies'). She then played a Hot Box Girl in *Guys and Dolls*, the lead role of Babe Williams in *The Pajama Game* and Jean MacKeith in *Brigadoon*. She was Assistant Conductor and a soloist for *Follow My Dream*, after which she played Adelaide Adams in *Calamity Jane* (when she was also Assistant MD and played violin in the band).



Emma then graduated to be MD for *Princess Ida* last autumn and, having spent some time performing principal dramatic roles for Newtown Amateur Dramatic Society, returned to NMTC to play violin in the band for *Oliver!* and is once more wielding the baton as MD for *Cinderella*.

Emma has also served on the NMTC committee, including as Secretary, and has played a key role in arranging social events for the Company over the past few years. We wish her all the best for her studies.