



ANDOVER MUSICAL AND OPERATIC SOCIETY

Newsletter

Spring 2007

www.amos-info.co.uk

Inside this issue:

Andover Musical and Operatic Society now has a new web site, bringing you all the latest information about the current production, plus previous shows, how to join and our newsletter.

The website also provides links to NODA and The Lights.

This is early days for the site and we welcome your feedback and ideas. Please log on regularly to try it out. We aim to keep it fresh by including rehearsal photos and other topical material, and your suggestions and contributions, including photos, will be very useful.

Let us know also if you have any problems with the site as people with different computers may have varying experiences when moving around the site and reading the screen.

The website is the creation of Tracey and Darren Fryer and we would like to thank them for their hard work in getting us up and running so quickly; thanks also to Eve Corton who kept our old community site going.

If you are interested in working on the website or with the Publicity Team in any capacity, please contact Paul Marsh at paul_marshall@talk21.com.

As well as the website, the team is responsible for library window advertising, marketing our shows, media articles, designing posters and leaflets, poster distribution and leaflet drops, banner advertising, mail-shots, advertising through parish magazines and providing material for the front of house display.

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Tribute to Sheila Blenkinship 1942-2007

All of us who worked with Sheila and shared her enjoyment of the musical theatre have been saddened by her recent death.

AMOS was not the only company that benefited from Sheila's skills and enthusiasm, as she had worked with the operatic group in Swanage before moving to Salisbury and joining Sarum Light Opera Society (SLOS) in about 1988. Some of their many productions in which Sheila took part were *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, *The Mikado*, *Hello Dolly!*, *Carmen* and *The Merry Widow*.

It was while working with the Salisbury company that Sheila first teamed up with Chris Johnson on creating costumes - a partnership that continued when Chris persuaded Sheila to join AMOS after the Salisbury company closed in the '90s. It was also in Salisbury that Sheila enthused her daughter Nikki to taking up singing and dancing again as a hobby.

Nikki takes up the story:

"After SLOS folded, I think around 1994-1995, Mum stopped doing operatics for a while. However, Christine joined AMOS and kept encouraging Mum to join, saying that the journey from Salisbury wasn't really that far and that the society was a friendly one, a key part of the enjoyment for Mum. Mum really missed her singing during this time and joined AMOS in late 1999. Her first show with AMOS was *Me & My Girl* and I remember her telling me what was happening with the show and how much she was enjoying it.

She did encourage me to join but I was taking exams for my job as well as working full-time and couldn't fit it in. I joined AMOS in late 2001 and my first show was *Half a Sixpence*. After that, the only big show Mum and I have missed was *Carousel* due to my wedding in April 2003.

Mum was always happy to be in the chorus - after her role in a pantomime, she said that she wasn't cut out for principal parts but she was happy to be part of the show. (The panto had been written by one of the SLOS cast, and we took it on tour to small village halls around Salisbury for a week or two. Mum took on quite a big role in this and had to sing a solo as well as learn lines - she was terrified!)

She liked to dance and move too - that stemmed from her starting in operatics in Swanage as a adult dancer with the dancing school.

She was keen to get things right and we would often get together at home and practice more complicated dances together. It took us ages to learn all the fan movements for *The Mikado* that we did with SLOS and also the dances for *Crazy for You* last year, tapping away on her

kitchen floor!

When we auditioned for *Crazy for You*, she wasn't sure about auditioning for *Follies 1*, saying that she would be the oldest Follie ever at 63! I said she should still do it because she was a good tap dancer and with the wigs and costumes on, she had just as good legs as the rest of us *Follies 1* who were 30 years and more her junior!!

And then who could forget *Music!Music! Music!* in October last year? Mum was determined to be in it even though she knew she would be having chemotherapy and just asked Kathy to put her on the end



of the line so that if she couldn't make it on stage, it wouldn't mess up the number. She made every single performance and 95% of the numbers she was in and also did a lovely duet with John. He and all the other members gave her loads of encouragement and support and she got out there and did it, despite her previously saying that she could never do a principal singing role by herself because she didn't

have a good enough voice. She also sang in the Carols in the Chantry Centre just before Christmas - she loved singing carols and this was one thing she had really missed doing for the past few years.

She started to rehearse for *My Fair Lady* and up until the most recent news about the state of her health, was still determined to do it. Even when she knew she wouldn't be able to take part, she asked me if I was still going to. I hesitated for a milli-second and got as far as 'Um...' when she said 'No, you must carry on doing it because I'm going to come and see it'. And as hard as it is to think about, I think she will be there.

She loved the whole show atmosphere - rehearsing, getting ready for the show, the singing, getting costumes, the buzz of it all. And to think she originally started out painting some scenery as a favour to the operatic society in Swanage and as a dancer.

Suffice it to say that Mum was first and foremost my friend and we shared this passion for being on stage in some form or another. Even if she wasn't on stage and I was, then she was involved with my costumes and backstage, helping me to dress in numerous dancing shows. She just loved being there.

I'd like to express my thanks too to everyone in AMOS, both present and past members, who have expressed their sorrow at the news and been extremely supportive during this difficult time for Peter and me. It is nice to know that everyone will remember her with fondness and for her spirit and love for the stage."

AGM Report

Q. What's the difference between a cheese and wine party and an AMOS AGM?

A. There was no cheese!

...but the atmosphere was just as good.

Over 30 people attended the recent AGM to review our performance over the last year, select the new committee and say a fond farewell and thank you to Sue and John Parker.

Sue opened the proceedings by summarising the challenges that had faced AMOS during the year and the changes that were to come, including the restructure of the Society.

She talked about her and John's long association with AMOS and underlined their continuing commitment to the Society, albeit in a mentoring role, as they hand over responsibilities and look forward to a well-deserved rest.

John, our treasurer for many years, explained that despite the last few difficult years for the society, our finances continue to hold up - just! We all need to build on his careful and resourceful management with new and creative ways of bringing the money in.

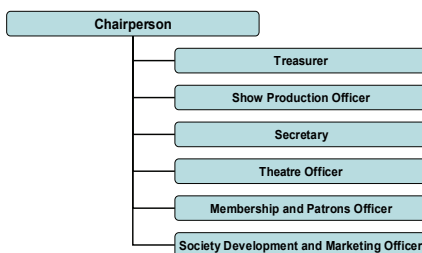
Joe Crawley delivered his director's report on *Crazy for You* - a show that many bigger companies would have thought twice about putting on, especially on a small school stage. However,

its success encouraged us all and led to performances that did us credit.

As Lady Bracknell might have said - To lose one musical director may be regarded as a misfortune - to lose both looks like carelessness! But this is just what happened to AMOS during the rehearsals for this production as Viv Finer left us to take up a new job in Devon and Neil Streeter stepped in, only to have to hand over to Kevin Riley for the actual performance week, due to a previous commitment.

Neil's MD's report paid tribute to the hard work that society members had put in and the results that they had achieved. He was optimistic for the success of AMOS so long as we play to our strengths and work within the constraints imposed by The Lights theatre.

New committee structure



Paul Marsh reviewed the achievements of the Publicity team during the year, including enhanced press exposure and the new website.

The meeting then moved on to the election of Officers and Committee.

The new committee under the revised structure is:

Chair - Carol Robinson

Treasurer - Debbie Greenwood

Secretary - Tracey Fryer

Show Production Officer - Kathy Rawles

Theatre Officer - Linda Bagnall

Marketing and Society Development Officer - Paul Marsh

Membership and Patrons Officer - Denyse Coles

The meeting elected Phil Keates and Mac Poulton as Honorary members. John Parker joins Ros Penny, Don Cannell and Tony Broad as Vice Presidents. Sue Parker has accepted the role of President and will take this over from the Mayor of Test Valley - Councillor Jim Neal - after *My Fair Lady*.

The meeting concluded with Sue thanking everyone who had worked on the committee and in any other capacity towards the continuing survival of the Society.

Sue and John were presented with flowers and gifts to show our appreciation for them and their dedication to AMOS.

The evening concluded with refreshments and an opportunity for everyone to catch up and discuss their plans for the future.

Here's to AMOS and its continuing success!



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Affiliated to the National
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NODA no.00002093



Beginners and Curtain Calls

AMOS would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

Lorraine Lawie

We are also delighted to announce the arrival of the following:

Alexander David, born on 14th February; a son for Nicki and Andy Shepherd, now living in Australia.

It is with great sorrow that we report the death on February 7th of Sheila Blenkinship

Autumn Concert - 25-27 October 2007

While most of us are working hard rehearsing for *My Fair Lady*, some people are looking ahead to our autumn concert.

Claire Nias - who directed *Godspell* in 2005 - has returned to create a concert based on music used in TV ads. The idea originated from a joking remark made at a Society meal in a local restaurant and we soon realised that it was an unusual way to offer people a range of musical treats.

The concert will be called *Commercial Break!*

As Claire explained "If people are fed up with only hearing a little bit of their favourite tune on an advert and wish they could hear the whole thing, then this is the show for them! Packed with songs from adverts old and new this truly has something for everyone. From 'I'd like to teach the world to sing' to 'Zadok the Priest' and from the 'Flower Duet' from *Lakme* via the Beach Boys to 'You gotta friend' there is bound to be a number that everyone can enjoy."

With the usual mix of songs, dance and fun, this will appeal to TV addicts and music buffs alike!

The concert will run in The Lights from 25th to 27th October.