

OOS President



While America chooses, Oxted Operatic have chosen their next President. Congratulations to Stella Thomas as she takes up her new office. Stella has had an illustrious career at the Barn appearing in some notable productions, many unfortunately before my time at the Barn, but I do remember her giving a spirited performance in *Camelot* as Morgan Le Faye, commanding the stage in long green hair with twigs and leaves growing out of it and diamonds all around her eyes.

Our showbiz reporter Patsy Poppet caught up with Stella at the checkout at Morrisons and, while standing at the back of a long queue, had time to ask a few questions:

Are you pleased to be Oxted Operatic Society's new President?

I am deeply honoured and delighted to be Oxted Operatic Society's new President and I hope to be a good and caring incumbent.

When did you join the society?

I joined in 1958 as the tea-lady. This has come full circle as I am washing up again at *Chess* rehearsals, hence the bottle of washing up liquid in my basket.

What has been your favourite part?

There are so many. The news reader in *Forbidden Plant*, Bobbie's mother in *Crazy For You*, Eliza Doolittle, Kate, Nellie Forbush, Miss Adelaide . . .

What is your favourite song?

Miss Adelaide's Lament in *Guys and Dolls*. I sat on a stool at the front of a darkened theatre with single spot. "The average unmarried female, basically insecure . . . in other words, just from hanging around for that plain little band of gold, a person . . . can develop a cold." A close second is "I Could Scream" in *Oliver*. I sang/screamed to two different Mr Bumbles. Bless 'em both.

What was your scariest song?

The Wedding Song in *Kiss me Kate* when I had an unaccompanied cadenza to sing. I practised for hours. The cats got quite alarmed.

Have you ever forgotten the words of a song on stage?

The tongue-twisting MacDonald, MacTavish song in *Brigadoon* threw me at one performance. I danced off stage as if it was part of the song, took a quick look at the prompt book and danced back on, still singing.

Is there a show you would have loved to do?

Call Me Madam – a wonderful show. There's a brilliant double-song duet sung by the lady ambassador and the Prime Minister.

What was your most emotional part?

Nellie Forbush when Emile has gone off on a secret mission and she fears he will not return. Also as ragged woman prisoner in *Man of La Mancha*, nursing a dying baby.

Which was your most exciting show at the Barn Theatre?

The eight-hour *Nicholas Nickleby*.

Any costume memories?

Too many to mention. But I enjoyed wearing some of Eileen Joyce's magnificent stage evening gowns which she gave to the society. Now I'm in her shoes. There's progress for you.

Do you miss not having leading roles?

Not any more. I don't miss the hard work, the agony, the nerves. I often rehearsed, alone in an empty theatre; the role was more than just learning lines. I took on the skin of that character, became them, lived their lives.

I see we have reached the front of the queue so thank you, Stella, for answering these questions. Before I pay do you have a message for members of Oxted Operatic Society?

Yes I do, enjoy every moment. Be in harmony with the writer and the composer. It's wonderful that we have such a beautiful theatre to work in and its reputation deserves our very best. I'm with you all the way.

A Comical Glow for award winning actors

Comic timing is..... everything, as they say! And the Glow actors are discovering just that! Fresh from their success in the Southern Counties Drama Festival (*Best Youth Production 2012* and *Best Young Actor 2012*) and a highly successful production of the emotional and dramatic *Fiddler On The Roof*, our award winning youth team are branching out from musical theatre and taking on adult comedy.

"Glow is a theatre group which constantly strives to push our members, allowing them to work on new theatrical genres, and encouraging them to be bold enough to take on new challenges with confidence and skill. The forthcoming production of the hilarious *Murdered To Death* has shown our actors that comedy is as hard to portray as tragedy. They have raised their game and the play is set to be a highly entertaining evening".

Murdered to Death by Peter Gordon is a wonderful spoof of the best of Agatha Christie traditions. Set in a country manor house in the 1930's, the play introduces the inept and bungling Inspector Pratt, who battles against the odds to solve the murder of the house's owner. It soon becomes clear that the murderer isn't finished yet, but will the miscreant be unmasked before everyone else has met their doom?

Shots are fired. Characters are killed off. Mysteries unravel faster than Miss Maple's knitting. Motives flit from person to person. And, of course, the inspector gets the right man in the end. Or does he?

Performances on Friday 30th November and Saturday 1st December. Show time is 7.30pm, ticket prices are £6.50 available online or from 01883 720167.

Further productions from Glow this year are *A Christmas Carol* in December, The Southern Counties Drama Festival in February, *Gone With The Breeze* in March and *The Wizard of Oz* (with the hit MGM score) in July 2013. Variety being the spice of Glow life!

Jackie Driscoll

Quote

"People come up to me and talk about some experience that has remained with them. That for me is the only real legacy: the idea that one has left a lingering trace in people's memories. In the end that's all a director can hope to do." - Peter Brook, on reaching the age of 85.