

CAODS AGM 2019

Chairman's Report

This report covers the period June 2018 to May 2019, focussing on our achievements during the past year and the Society's priorities for 2020. It has been a fantastic year again, with 2 wonderful shows – Top Hat and My Fair Lady - lots of amazing team work and a huge amount of hard work from so many people – not only to get our productions on stage – but with everything else that comes with running a £100,000 turnover organisation every year! All of which just shows what a fabulous society CAODS continues to be, especially as we head into our Centenary Year!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our wonderful President, Gill Plumtree, for her unending support to the society, the Committee and to you all – she is always there show week escorting NODA and our VIPs, always at our Preview days encouraging us all, always hard at work with a sewing machine prior to the shows taking up a hem here or there or finding a spare 2 inches so we can breathe in our costumes, and always being at the end of the phone if ever we need some wise advice. Thank you Gill, it is much appreciated.

Firstly, we must not start without thinking of our dear Neville Homersham, who passed away in January. A stalwart supporter of CAODS over many many years and Friend of CAODS, a friendly face at our AGMs and events. He will be missed. May he rest in peace.

Also, would like to take this opportunity to send lots of big get well wishes to Christopher Yorke-Edwards who is currently in hospital receiving some treatment. We hope he feels better soon and that his ongoing treatment will help to make him feel much more bubbly so he can get on with enjoying himself – get home soon for Christmas Chris! And to Deanna Tucker who has undergone major surgery on her neck today, hopefully fixing her years of feeling unwell! We hope you get better very soon and we send you both much love from us all at CAODS. Also Sue Wilkinson who has just had an operation today, we send her all our love and get week wishes.

So what a year of productions it has been! Our September 2018 production was 'Top Hat', one of the greatest musicals ever written. We were delighted to have gained the rights to this show which was directed by Sallie Warrington and Musical Director, Clare Penfold - thank you to the ladies for their fabulous production. It was a toe-tapping summer of wonderful company numbers, dancing maids, hilarious characters and classy tunes. Show week was a great success, 85.2% sales, superb reviews and a profit was even made. The Scenic set was huge and difficult, there was an awful lot to do for the crew – so a massive thank you to Brad Wendes as Stage Manager and the entire backstage team who worked so hard making the transitions look seamless. A massive thank you to Debra Sparshott and Laura McCullagh who worked so hard during the rehearsal period as Production Assistant and Dance Captain, and to Cassie Estall who did a superb job as Wardrobe Mistress for a heavy costume show. Without being corny, we definitely did 'put on the ritz' and glamour of the 1930's era.

Another classic show for Spring 2019, the iconic 'My Fair Lady', which CAODS had not performed since 2000. We were delighted to have a large cast for such a fun Company show, welcoming back Ray Jeffery as Director and Bryan Cass as Musical Director. Our thanks to them both for such a great production and to Kieran Bacon who worked tirelessly as Production Assistant as well as having a principal role in the show. Our thanks also to Olivia Bentley as Dance Captain, tidying the big company numbers, and Lynette Sullivan as Wardrobe Mistress, who did a sterling job especially with providing a lot of the costumes from our ever-growing CAODS wardrobe. How lucky we are to have Lynette managing our superb wardrobe – not only for our shows – but for the increasing number of hire enquiries we now get from elsewhere. This is a massive job and hiring out costumes does not just happen by itself – the extra little bit of revenue comes in very handy and our reputation for having

such a superb in-house costume store just gets better and better. Thank you Lynette for your constant hard work managing this. We were delighted to welcome Clive Wilton as Stage Manager for 'My Fair Lady' – simply he is a joy to work with I'm sure you agree! Not only is he always present at rehearsals helping as much as he can, he instils confidence from the Production Team and his crew, and is as calm as a cucumber during the tech and show week itself. Thank you Clive for coming on board as SM – and we have since been lucky enough to have had him since for Evita, currently Shrek and he is also booked in for Kipps – very good news! My Fair Lady was such a successful show, great reviews, a lot of fun had by all, and a whopping 94.8% ticket sales – leading to a very healthy profit which Jean will talk about later. Special mention also to John Sullivan who, once again, managed the technical aspects of MFL sourcing and manufacturing all the sound effects and equipment for the 'elocution' sections. Not only did we have these for the show, we were able to use them in rehearsals – all through the touch of Johns remote controls! Brilliant! Again, how lucky we are – Paul Galley who runs our sound was a happy chappy that week!

Financially, both shows for this period sold incredibly well – which is not an easy task in this climate! It goes to show that show choice still remains the most important aspect of running the society – shows that don't sell well really do hit us hard, so choosing a show – that is available and you can actually be granted the rights to – and keeps the wide range of members in the society happy – never gets any easier! The Committee have separate Future Shows Meetings to try and map out what might be suitable shows to apply for. We look at who else is doing what in the area and when, cost factors, is there a set available, would it sell, what's in it for the Company, dancers etc. With this in mind we can tell you that last week we applied for the rights to 'Kinky Boots' as it became available. Jean has a great relationship with MTI rightsholders and so we knew it was coming. Our application was in within 2 hours of it being released! Unfortunately, yesterday we heard that we had not been selected for the show for Spring 2021 – obviously very disappointing, but I just wanted to highlight to you that the Committee do have shows on the 'watch list' and really do try hard to get them for everyone to enjoy – especially at speed!. As ever, if you have shows that you would like the Committee to consider, please send them through for discussion. The next Future Shows Meeting is very early in January.

There have also been a number of personal celebrations this year for our members. Jill and Jake Burtenshaw celebrated the birth of their baby son, Miles, in January and Laura McCullagh and her partner, Matt, welcomed baby Alfie last Christmas. Well done both – some future chaps to join the society!!!! And welcome baby Charlie, a grandchild for Caroline and Kevin.

Every year, we reflect at Committee about how much has happened over the year – and we are always quite surprised as to how much we have achieved as a society. There has been a huge amount of work going on again this year, which we do try to share with you as quickly as possible at the time. Lets just reflect on some of these things that we have been working on since our last AGM:

ACHIEVEMENTS

- We have successfully introduced a new Director, Chris Cuming, to the Society, currently working on Shrek. This has been quite a lengthy process and has taken quite a bit of Committee time and hard work with his 'induction' with us. We hope that those of you involved in Shrek are enjoying rehearsals so far and working with Chris. The Open Evening from Shanghai was certainly a new one for us!!!! Thank you to everyone who has helped to welcome Chris to CAODS and for all your help to him in whatever capacity! Of course, we always welcome any feedback from you as to your thoughts on any new creative team members.

- We also welcomed a new Musical Director to CAODS this year, James Harragan, who worked with us on 'Evita'. James had a huge job on his hands with probably one of the most difficult scores ever written, but what a successful show that was too. James has less experience than our other MD's, and was a learning curve for us all, but we do hope you found him to be an enthusiastic and sound MD. Again, feedback is always welcome. We know James loved working with us and it has certainly helped him to grow as an MD. Just to you know also – new Directors and MDs are not just hired – we give them an extensive 'grilling' at a Committee Meeting first of all – sort of a meet and greet interview process. It is only from there and looking at their previous experience and how they would fit in with us, are they hired.
- Not reporting on it in depth for this AGM, but we had a wonderful week with EVITA in September. What an iconic show to luckily get the rights to, and what a show it was. A massive thank you to Sallie, James and Cassie who was Production Assistant for all their immense work on the show, and to Clive, Lynette and everyone who worked on it behind the scenes. Again another box office success, super reviews and another profit made. Wonderful!
- Cost saving and efficiency has been high on the Committee agenda again this year. Every year costs go up in most areas – so saving money where we can across the board is vital to the success of our society. Indeed, the Civic Theatre have suggested they may increase fees by 20% next year! Wow – that's a lot isn't it, and somehow we have to find that in our budget somewhere. All areas of budgets are constantly being reviewed and challenged – which Jean I'm sure will mention shortly - but we have made good progress again this year on improving those savings and will continue to do so again in 2020, including continuing to negotiate better fees with Directors and MDs. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jean, our amazing Treasurer and Vice-Chairman, who is just brilliant and managing our financials, keeping budgets in check and everything in order with the Charities Commission. Jean, thank you !
- Sadly sponsorship has been increasingly difficult to attract this year – every one is tightening their belts it seems. So if you have any ideas or would like to help with sponsorship bids we would love to hear from you!
- This year we introduced the 'Early Bird' ticket offer for My Fair Lady, which involved reduced ticket prices for the first month after the box office opens. This was a big decision to make to help boost ticket sales, but after a lot of analysis, the Committee decided to go for it and try it out. Jean will mention the outcome of how this went in her report.
- The Publicity Team lead by Cassie Estall have done an incredible job again, they have all worked their socks off throughout the year. The majority of our Publicity Team were non-Committee members again this year – so our thanks for their work this year to Natasha, Michelle, Becki, Keeley, Kieran, David and Brad. Of course, selling tickets is the responsibility of every member, so your continued support of selling the show whether you are involved or not would be grateful received. Please share everything that comes out on line and via email etc. Thanks also to Cassie for devising and producing the Programmes – a huge task and even better, we make a profit on these also! Thank you Cassie particularly as this year, as she steps back from Publicity – she is still going to do the Programme but leaves the Publicity team in great shape. Thank you.

- We have been delighted to welcome a good number of new members to CAODS this year and also new Friends of CAODS. We are delighted to have you in the society and we hope you will enjoy the society as much as we do. You are so very welcome and we hope you will continue to be part of our productions and CAODS family. A massive thank you to Steph, our Membership Secretary, and Dave Yetton, Membership Liaison, who have the unenviable task of asking people for money and doing all the admin! It is very much appreciated and we hope that all members will continue to help make their efforts easier in 2020 by paying on time – we know you will ! 😊
- We have successfully introduced the new ‘Friends of CAODS’ to replace the rather old-fashioned term of ‘Vice-President’. As you know, this was agreed by the Membership at last years AGM. We have introduced the package of benefits and we have a steady number of 15 currently but hope that we will improve on this in 2020 – so if you would like to give CAODS even more support that you already do, please see Dave or Steph tonight.
- Massive thanks for the year to Kim Anderson as Bulletin Editor and to Jess Broad for her never-ending work on the CAODS website. Jess in particular is working non-stop at home building more layers into our website, with our historic shows and photos. If you haven’t looked at our website recently, I would encourage you to have a good look at the ‘past shows’ area and see the huge amount of work Jess has done this year. Thank you ladies!
- A big thank you to Tracey for organising the Quiz Night in October and to Jean, Corinne and Geoff who organise our lovely Coffee Mornings. They really are such a lovely way for us to get together outside of productions and show weeks. Thanks to Helen and Fae who run the tuck shop so brilliantly, and to everyone who supports our social events. It was a shame we had to cancel the Race Night this year but we really do hope that the Centenary celebrations will be well attended in 2020 and 2021.
- A massive thank you to everyone who works behind the scenes at CAODS – crew, props, dressers, Gill Caton & front of house, wardrobe, chaperones, the list goes on! Your hard work and time is greatly appreciated.
- And to Kieran, thank you. Kieran has decided to stand down from Committee this year. It has been great having you on the team and we really appreciate your help with sponsorship and publicity. We hope you enjoy the break and a bit more free time!
- Just to touch on current and forthcoming shows. Shrek is well underway and proving to be a fun show! This is probably the most expensive and complex show we have ever undertaken, particularly in terms of characters, make up, prosthetics and special effects that are so important. Behind the scenes, the production team have been working incredibly hard on the show since March. It really is a big job and our special thanks must go to Lynette and John Sullivan and Janet Osborne-Williams for all their efforts so far. Not an easy show to do and it is taking a lot of man-hours to get it all ready in time. The audition process was extremely complex this time round with auditions finally finishing late in the day – our thanks to Corinne Dobinson for taking on the role of Chairman of the Panel on the day, and the work that went into it prior to and after auditions. Corinne works tirelessly as Secretary of the society, always so much to do. It is much appreciated Corinne, thank you!

- We are already preparing for our forthcoming production of Kipps – and at this stage are delighted to inform you of the Production Team. Director will be Ray Jeffery, Musical Director Bryan Cass, and someone called Claire Carr will choreograph the show! Ray will only be attending on Saturday rehearsals setting dialogue and some of the principal numbers. As I mentioned, Clive will be SM and Lynette is Wardrobe Mistress. We hope you are excited for this very exciting new version of Half A Sixpence! All dates etc will be out on the forthcoming Bulletin that is coming out before Christmas.
- And finally, thank you to those of you who attended the first Centenary Working Group meeting a few weeks ago. It was an interesting evening and lots of ideas were generated. The main focus currently is on 3 main areas:
 - The Centenary Ball at the Lion in November 2020
 - Alumni 'Afternoon Tea' for Members and Ex-Members (a Sunday Afternoon)
 - A CAODS themed 'Murder Mystery' Fundraising Evening.

In addition, we are looking at producing a photo album, souvenirs and all sorts of other things to help celebrate our 100 years. More details will be out shortly including a planner of 2020 and 2021. Its not too late to get involved, we are going to need more people to help on these events – so please let us know if you would like to get involved.

So - it's been another busy year! As a Committee, we thank every one of you for your support to us and for all your observations, suggestions, questions and hard work. We are a great society and always have fantastic team work. As I say every year, there will always be different views on decisions that are made, what works and what doesn't. But please be assured that the Committee spend a lot of time and discussion on decisions that are made, and they spend an amazing amount of their own personal time for the continued success of the society. I would like to thank every one of them personally for all their hard work this year – the good times and the tough times! You really are a wonderful bunch and I think we should all give them a round of applause to say thank you.

Finally, I would just like to thank everyone who has supported me as Chairman for the last 3 years and all my years on Committee. This includes my long-suffering husband Paul – believe me, he has put up with a lot as Tracey and Christine will no doubt tell you as previous Chairmen, including a lot of sleepless nights!!! The role of Chairman can be a very mixed bag – with big highs and some difficult times. My personal career has evolved over the last few years, quite unexpectedly, and I have found myself in the difficult decision of what to do for the best. My decision to stand down as both Chairman and on Committee is however the best one for everyone concerned, including my family and the society, and allows me to continue my directing career with more time and focus. I leave this wonderful team with very mixed feelings, but am very very proud of the work we have done over the past 3 years, indeed all of the work that has been done during my time on Committee. I would like to thank the Committee all for always supporting me and for all your work, and for your understanding for my decision. I will always be part of the CAODS family (so you don't get rid of me that easily !!) and who knows, maybe one day I will be back to work on Committee again. I know the society has a fantastic future ahead of it. But for now, thank you very much and I wish you and your families and happy, healthy and wonderful Christmas and year ahead!

Claire Carr
Chairman, CAODS
December 2019