



Newsletter

Spring – Autumn 2023

Dear Members and Friends,

I'm absolutely delighted to be taking on the writing of the company's newsletter for you all! Our wonderful Emma did a fantastic job before me and will be a tough epistolary act to follow, but she's taken pity on me and kindly shown me the ropes, so. Allow me to bring you up to date on all the awesome stuff we in MMT have been up to these past seasons, as well as some of the exciting things we have planned for the fall.

Oh What a Circus, Oh What a Show!



Spring 2023: *Evita*

Wednesday 29th March –

Saturday 1st April 2023

The Savoy Theatre, Monmouth



A very different show to our usual productions, Lloyd Webber and Rice's liberty-taking biography of Argentinian First Lady Eva Perón proved a challenging and ambitious project to be sure. Every member of cast, crew and production came together and worked hard to pull it off, "rollin' on out" a spectacular success which garnered rave reviews from our audiences! Huge congratulations to director Paul Ellis, musical director Ruth Friend, accompanist and repetiteur Helen Stidolph, choreographer Amelia Baraskiewicz, stage manager Steve Brettle, production secretary Keri Russell, and all

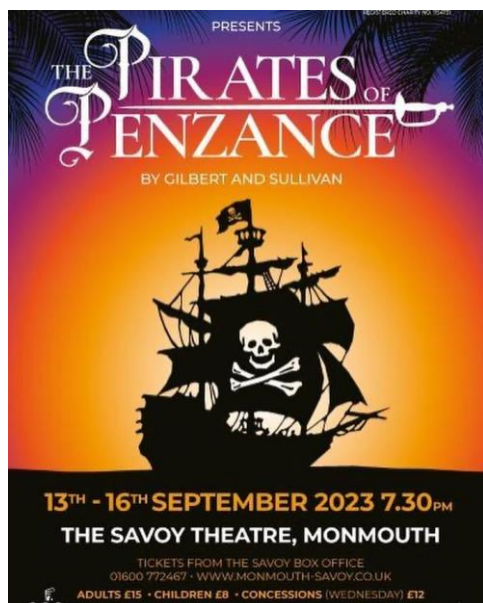
others whose tireless work behind the scenes “got this show on the road and made it obvious Perón was off and rolling!”

The performances of the principals were roundly praised: Cait Davies was “rainbow high” as the driven but tragic Evita herself, Tom Rigby as a politically-scheming Juan Perón, Adrian Bevan as charismatic tango singer Agustín Magaldi, talented newcomer Ellie Stevens as a heartbreaking Mistress, and Corey Jones an audience favourite as the mercurial narrator Ché (whose perfectly-captured tech rehearsal photo became something of an iconic production meme amongst the company). Not forgetting the outstanding effort and commitment of our ensemble, many of whom played up to seven different roles throughout, from aristocrats to soldiers to adoring *descamisados* (or, in Nick’s memorable case, *despantalones*), and navigated the many, many mic and costume changes like champions.

Here are some of our highlights – and some of the lovely messages we received!



Forward on the Foe!



Autumn 2023: *The Pirates of Penzance*

Wednesday 13th September –

Saturday 16th September 2023

The Savoy Theatre, Monmouth



Scuttle your cunarders and ship your handspikes! For our autumn offering this year, we're pouring out a generous ration of ridiculousness (to say nothing of pirate sherry) with a comic opera classic: Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*. A rollocking Victorian tale of piracy, paradox and police (in)competence: we tell the story of young Frederic, played by director Adrian Bevan, whose single-minded commitment to his Sense of Duty lands him in a variety of increasingly hilarious scrapes with a scheming pirate captain (Meriwether Maturin) and his inebriated first mate Samuel (Helen Keefe), infatuated former nursemaid Ruth (Katie Ellis), a model Major General with more wiles than he lets on (Chris Godwin), and the entire Cornish police force (headed by Philip Chant as the Sergeant). All he wants is a peaceful marriage to beloved fiancée Mabel (Holly Thody). Can he outwit the ways of paradox, foil a vengeful pirate plot, and escape unscathed from Mabel's sister Edith (Keri Russell) and their gaggle of other sisters, aunts and governesses to find his happily-ever-after?

Rehearsals are almost at a close and booking is now available on the Savoy's website, so here's a first-rate opportunity to grab tickets with impunity! We hugely appreciate the support of members and friends of MMT, and every ticket sold helps us make the next show even more awesome. The cast has been working hard on lines and lyrics, swords are being repaired ('Cat-like Tread' did a number on the ship's armaments), truncheons polished, and lace and dimity arranged to pedantic Victorian satisfaction. So please do tip your local fools! Come along to a performance for the culmination of our talented actor-director Adrian's efforts, along with the usual suspects: musical director Ruth Friend, and accompanist and repetiteur Helen Stidolph, who are joined by stage manager Adam Wells and everyone else who's been working away behind the scenes to get this show shipshape and scurvy-free!

"A rollocking band of pirates we? Don't let that get Spoonered or we're all in trouble." - Helen Keefe (Samuel)

An assortment of raucous rehearsals in which we Sally Forth (she's a great gal), talk lots and very fast about the weather, and learn more than we ever wanted to know about the square of the hypotenuse:



Upcoming excitement:

We're so pleased to announce that for our spring production, we will be returning to the Savoy stage with...



Spring 2024: *My Fair Lady*

Wednesday 17th April –
Saturday 20th April 2024
The Savoy Theatre, Monmouth

In Lerner and Loewe's musical adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, the upper and lower echelons of London society meet in a culture clash when impoverished Cockney flower-seller Eliza Doolittle enlists the help of one Professor Henry Higgins for elocution lessons. Whether or not Eliza will get her wish of 'becoming a lady' before she and Higgins drive each other to violence, however, remains to be seen, and the shenanigans of her happy-go-lucky father Alfred, Higgins' associate Colonel Pickering, and the besotted Freddy Eynsford-Hill aren't helping.

Keep an eye out on our website, Facebook and Instagram pages for future updates on rehearsals and auditions for this one – it's sure to be a lot of fun, and if you're interested in getting involved, we'd love to have you! We're a friendly lot and always delighted to welcome new members, so if you've ever thought of giving the boards a try, (or are just looking for a wonderfully insane family of lunatics to adopt you), come along on another Victorian lark with us and find your people.

Meanwhile in the wings...

Thank you, Waitrose!

We're thrilled to be able to say a big 'thank you' to our local Waitrose who have shown us their support with a generous donation of £300 to help fund our piratical escapades.

If their unrivalled support scheme for penniless pirates had only been around when **our** poor, hapless pirates were, it'd have mattered far less that they got conned out of their plunder so "orften"! Thank you Waitrose!



MMT Quiz Night:

We did a quiz! The group's most obscure knowledge was soundly put to the test on 14th July by our very own Becky and Nick to raise funds for future productions. The evening was a huge success, with lots of fun had and over £200 raised for the company! A massive 'thank you' to Becky and Nick for organising and hosting a fantastic time, and to Monmouth Cricket Club for allowing our good-natured tomfoolery into their venue.





At the end of the night, Gay, Emma, Lyn, Judith and friends (above) emerged victorious and were well-rewarded for the enormity of their brains with chocolates and our undying respect.

Our lovely Keri (left) struck lucky in the raffle and took home an amazing chocolate cake home-made by Becky!

Get involved!

Following the success of Quiz Night we're keen to throw another happening in pursuit of fun and funds! If you've got an idea for a social event and/or would be interested in helping organise or run one, we'd love to hear from you. Please do drop a line to any member of the Committee, via email, social media or in person and we'll all have another get-together soon! (See the 'Contact Us' page of the MMT website if you're struggling on how to reach out.) We've had a couple of promising submissions already, so thank you to those who've shared and keep the ideas flowing in.

On the subject of fundraising, did you know you can raise money for MMT just by shopping online? The more you know! A brilliant website called **easyfundraising.org.uk** exists to allow you to raise money for your favourite charities with support for over 7000 different online brands when you sign up. If that sounds like something you're into, definitely check it out and please consider supporting us by simply entering 'Monmouth Music Theatre' into the cause search at sign-up. So far we've been able to raise £1237.47 through our supporters – you're the best!

We're also on the look-out for kind volunteers interested in helping out with front-of-house for *Pirates*. It's a huge and greatly-appreciated help to us when members and friends are there to welcome audiences and sell programmes, so if you find yourself free any night from 13th-16th September and want to get involved houseward of the footlights (and see the show, of course), please do email Di Webb at **dirosewebb@gmail.com** and we'll make you an honorary member of our pirate crew!

A Nod from NODA:

We're delighted to be able to say that several of our talented members were nominated for this year's NODA Awards! Our recent Evita, Cait Davies, won Outstanding Performance for her role as Maria in MMT's production of *The Sound of Music* last spring, for which director Jane Rodgers also picked up the award for Outstanding Production. Tom Rigby additionally earned himself a nomination with his excellent portrayal of Captain von Trapp, while our *Pirates* co-director Domi Walker was nominated for her Mother Abbess. The Awards were presented at a Gala Dinner on 2nd September at the Holiday Inn, Newport – congratulations to all!



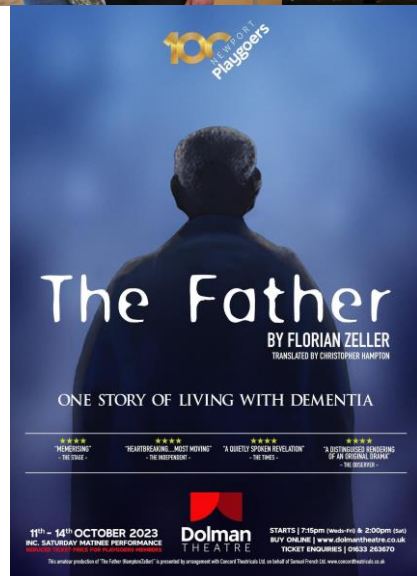
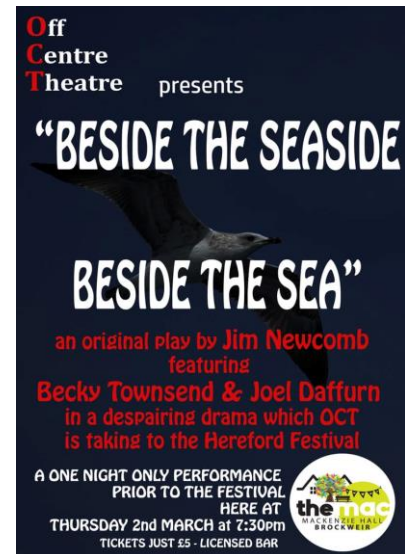
More from Our Members:

MMT's performers certainly know how to keep themselves busy: just because they're not always onstage with us doesn't mean they're not drama queens at all times...

Congratulations to Jane Bryant who directed a phenomenally funny production of *The Vicar of Dibley* for OCT that went down like a chocolate bar right after Lent every night! Ellie Stevens took to the stage again after giving us her Mistress in *Evita* to play the lead role of Geraldine Granger – watch out Dawn French. Nick Thompson and Becky Townsend also joined her as Hugo Horton and Alice Tinker (no, we still can't believe it's not butter either), while Gay Rogers portrayed a delightfully batty Letitia Cropley. We'll all be a bit suspicious of Gay's cooking for a while... Well done chaps and lasses!

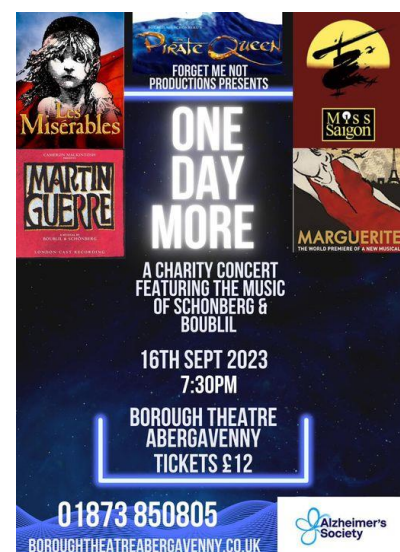


Becky Townsend was invited to perform the award-winning play *Beside the Seaside, Beside the Sea* with her co-star Joel and the team from OCT at the National Drama Festival at the Albany Theatre in Coventry in July. The best 14 plays were invited with entries even flying in from across Europe. Becky and Joel made history for OCT by securing an invite to the festival which showcases the “cream of amateur theatre.” Well done Becky and everyone involved at OCT!



Becky will also be performing the part of Anne in the serious drama *The Father* with Newport Playgoers in October at the Dolman - please go and support her if you can. Break a leg, Becky!

Finally, Cait Davies’ wonderful charity concert in aid of the Alzheimer’s Society will be on at the Borough Theatre, Abergavenny this September, featuring the music of Schonberg and Boublil. This cause is close to Cait’s heart as the music will be enjoyed in memory of her father, so please do go along to give her your support and be dazzled by the exceptional performances of the cast she’s put together.



Huzzah!

I hope you've enjoyed my first attempt at capturing the laughs and the banter and the community we've shared in MMT this past few seasons – and been fully entertained by all our theatrical hijinks! We've had an absolute blast rehearsing *Pirates* so if you've not been frightened away in the course of reading this by the force of our lunacy and want to see more from us, well. Tickets are available where all good tickets can be found! (The Savoy website. Obviously.) Please do feel free to let me know if you've got an intriguing bit of news, a theatrical achievement you're proud of, or a Most Ingenious Paradox, and I will do my best to do it justice in the next newsletter. Come delight me at **m.maturin@outlook.com** to get your thing published.

Until the next one: break a leg, pirates!

Meriwether