

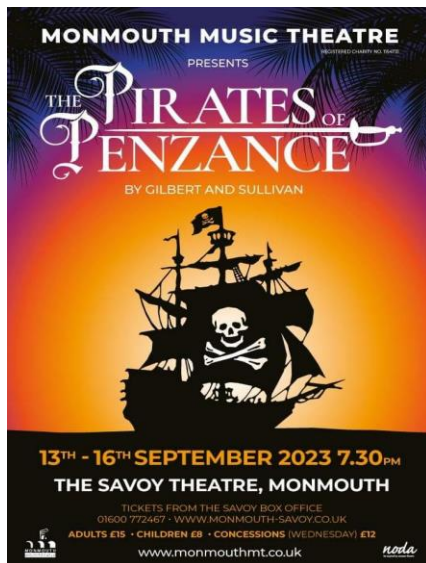


Newsletter Winter 2023-24

Dear Members and Friends,

2024 is upon us! I hope you all had, to quote a festive musical by the Tin Can Bros, a “Holly-jolly Non-denominationally Good Golly Holiday Time,” and to all a very happy and prosperous new year! Prepare yourselves for a visit from the Ghosts of Productions Past, Present and Future because we’ve got plenty of exciting news to catch up on...

A Rollocking Band of Pirates, We!



Autumn 2023: *The Pirates of Penzance*

Wednesday 13th September –
Saturday 16th September 2023
The Savoy Theatre, Monmouth



Our show for the fall of 2023 was Gilbert and Sullivan’s swashbuckling sensation *The Pirates of Penzance*, and true to form we left no swash unbuckled, cunarder unscuttled or handspike unshipped! At the helm, Adrian Bevan won the very medal for a debut directorial, absolutely killing it in the roles of actor, director and choreographer – huge congratulations to both him and co-director Domi Walker, who took command whenever mutiny threatened to break out over staring too long at the empty space where Frederic should be... Musical director Ruth Friend and accompanist/repetiteur Helen Stidolph stood undaunted and laughed in the face of ten-part harmonies as they

led us to musical victory, while Adam Wells kept the entire production ship-shape and scurvy-free from behind the scenes in a triumphant debut as stage manager.

The entire cast and crew really pulled together to get the show on the water; a brave group turned out one hot summer morning to defy the sun and paint the scenery. Three stone walls, a handful of gravestones, two poplar trees, and seventeen choruses of 'We Represent the Lollipop Trees' later, and we had a spectacular set to go a-pirating on! Check out these photos of our creative tomfoolery:



Each performance proved even more raucously fun than the last for all involved, with every single person going all-out. In addition to Adrian as a not-quite-21 but still spectacularly spry Frederic, newcomer Holly Thody enchanted audiences and castmates alike as Mabel with her ethereal high notes – we're pretty sure her ornamentation in 'Poor Wand'ring One' almost made it to space! Back playing Ruth for a second time with MMT was veteran opera singer Katie Ellis, whose comic timing had audiences rolling with laughter every night, and who formed a delightfully mischievous trio alongside scheming Pirate King Meriwether Maturin (affectionately described by one audience member as "Lord Flashheart, as played by Adam Ant") and Helen Keef as the hilariously-inebriated first mate Samuel (whose incredibly cursed Spoonerisms will live rent-free in our brains for the rest of time). Our model Major General was Chris Godwin, who immediately won theatregoers over with his immense wit and even more immense moustache, while Philip Chant – another newcomer – gave a strong debut performance keeping the rest of us in line as the Sergeant. Not forgetting, of course, our amazing ensemble, who all worked immensely hard to conquer the crunchiest harmonies Gilbert and Sullivan could muster, and racked up overtime mastering their sword-, truncheon- and/or parasol-work! (An honourable mention also goes to the many, many swords and truncheons that gave their lives during our more energetic rehearsals.)

Our audiences were treated to a rollocking good time – some really got into the spirit of the high seas and even turned up in costume, with our youngest honorary pirate being only four years old! We received many lovely comments from audience members: one said, "The singing and acting was superb. The direction was so comprehensive, but

natural. It was a pleasure being there.” From another: “An utterly engaging performance... spellbinding, fabulous, funny and a joy to watch.” And even: “A well-produced and -presented musical. The best G&S I have seen!” We even received a glowing review in the *Ross Gazette*, who called the show “Simply swashbuckling!” (If you’d like to read the whole article, you can find it [here](#).) Jolly good show, chaps – a glass of Pirate Sherry for all!



Just You Wait, 'Enry 'Iggins...



Spring 2024: *My Fair Lady*

Wednesday 17th April –

Saturday 20th April 2024

The Savoy Theatre, Monmouth



Click [here](https://www.monmouthmt.co.uk) to book tickets now!

This coming spring we're pressing pause on political correctness as we stage Lerner and Loewe's *My Fair Lady*: a "smashing, positively dashing" lark around Victorian London that's sure to make you shout, "Get me to the theatre on time!"

Returning after her triumphant debut as Mabel in our fall show *The Pirates of Penzance*, Holly Thody is Eliza Doolittle: a poor, Cockney flower seller who just dreams of a big chair, a warm fire, and a whole lot of chocolate. But when phonetics professor Henry Higgins (Adrian Bevan) boasts to his friend Colonel Pickering (Steve Banner) that he could pass her off as a duchess with a little tuition, Eliza challenges him to put his money where his mouth is. A bet is made, and the three embark upon a tempestuous experiment in language and etiquette. Eliza's ne'er-do-well father Alfred (Haydn Holder) and his disreputable drinking buddies Harry and Jamie (Philip Chant and Meriwether Maturin), recognising an opportunity to buy a Lot of Beer when they see one, can't believe their "little bit of luck."

In the ensuing shenanigans, a horse's arse gains Eliza an adoring stalker in Freddy Eynsford-Hill (Matthew Bryant), an unspecified plain somewhere in Spain gets particularly soggy, and Higgins' long-suffering housekeeper Mrs Pearce (Sheryl Westoby) tries to keep her employer alive long enough to present his "squashed cabbage leaf" to the Queen of Transylvania. Will the trio get away with their high society ruse, or will the meddling of Higgins' mother (Gay Rogers) and former student Zoltan Karpthy (Nick Thompson) "do them in?"

Making sure the cast say their vowels correctly is acclaimed director Jane Rodgers, who took home NODA's Outstanding Production award for her last MMT show, *The Sound of Music* in 2022. Also returning are the dream team of musical director Ruth Friend and accompanist/repetiteur Helen Stidolph, and with our Lords of the Backstage Steve Brett and Adam Wells joining forces as co-stage managers, we can be sure that even if Doolittle doesn't make it to the church, the church will get to DOOLITTLE on time!

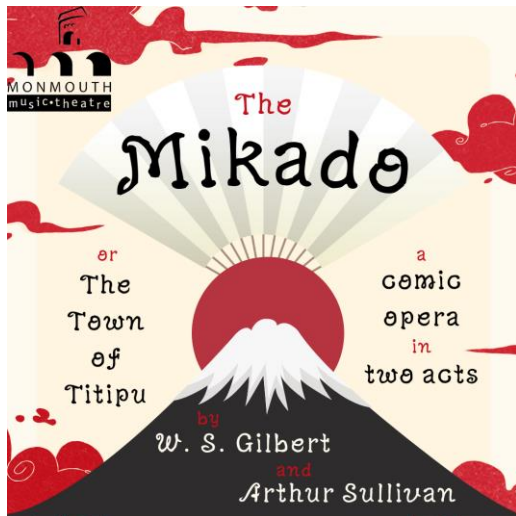
So join us at the Savoy as we ask the real questions: Why CAN'T the English learn to speak? WOULD Pickering be wounded if Higgins didn't send him flowers? And if a mouthful of marbles was necessary for Demosthenes, is it ALSO necessary for Eliza Doolittle? The one thing we do know is that there are only two safe topics: the weather, and everybody's health.



Upcoming excitement:

I'm sure you've all been eagerly waiting to hear what our next theatrical endeavour will be, and if I may take some liberties with a line from our current show: "We're willin' to tell ya, we're wantin' to tell ya, but we're NOT waitin' to tell ya!" We're delighted to announce that our autumn production will be...

Autumn 2024: *The Mikado*



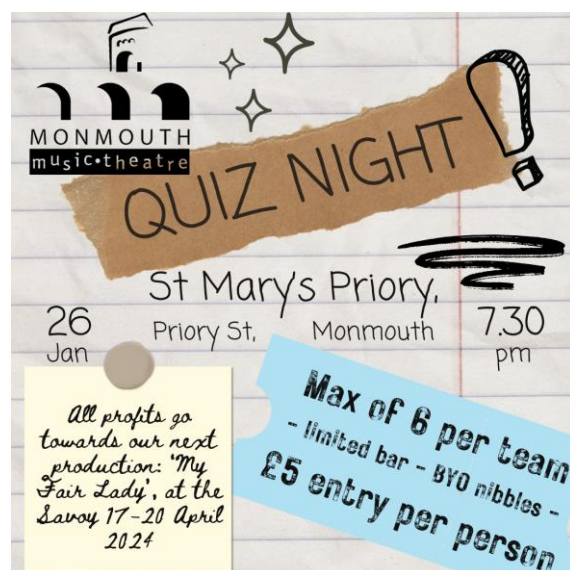
Here's a how-de-do! We're off to Japan this fall with another Gilbert and Sullivan classic, and this time all is neither well nor as it seems in the fictional town of Titipu. Nanki-Poo, a wandering minstrel, returns from his travels to marry Yum-Yum, his beloved, only to find her already betrothed to Ko-Ko, the Lord High Executioner. How far will Nanki-Poo go to win her back? Can he pull it off under the beady eyes of town officials Pooh-Bah and Pish-Tush? Who is Katisha, and what secret is Nanki-Poo hiding? Time is ticking to find answers, because the Mikado himself is coming to visit and he's issued the town a grisly ultimatum: kill one of your own within a month, or face his wrath.

If this one sounds like a lot of fun, firstly you're right, and secondly we'd love to have you involved! Rehearsal and audition dates will appear on our website and social media in April, so keep your eyes peeled for those. We love welcoming new members so as a one-time offer: new folks get guaranteed immunity from having their heads cut off by the Mikado! We're also still on the lookout for a director, so if you've got theatrical experience and a solid creative vision, we'd love to hear from you. Our contact details can be found [here](#) if you'd like to apply.

Quiz Night:

Back by popular demand, MMT's Quiz Night returns for round two and it's more terrifically tricky than ever! Join us at St Mary's Priory on Friday 26th Jan for an evening of trials and trivia-lations as we attempt to unseat reigning quiz champions Gay, Emma, Lyn and Judith. Choose your fighters wisely - we duel at 7.30pm and to the Victors will go Spoils!

All profits go towards staging *My Fair Lady* in April, so please do come along to have a laugh and support the company.



Get involved!

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 and we'll all have another get-together soon! If you're struggling on how to get in touch, [here](#) is our contact page to help you out. Thank you to those who have submitted ideas already – with the quality of the suggestions we've had so far, 2024 looks set to be jam-packed with all the fundraising fun we can handle! Keep those ideas flowing in, and keep an eye out on our Facebook and Instagram for posts with the hashtag **#MMTfunandfunds**, so you'll never miss out on the shenanigans.

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 you're not already in on it, what are you waiting for? Check it out by clicking the link above 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 £1266.44 through our supporters – you guys are smashing it!

Budget for theatregoing just won't play ball? Need an excuse not to partner your grandma at bridge night? Had a curse put on you that can only be undone by a good deed? Don't worry, we got you covered! We're always looking for kind volunteers to help out with front-of-house for shows, welcoming audiences and selling programmes. It's a huge and greatly-appreciated help to us, and a great way to rake in good karma and see the show absolutely free for you! So if you'd like to get involved houseward of the footlights and help out with *My Fair Lady* any or all nights from 17th-20th April, please do email Di Webb at dirosewebb@gmail.com and we'll have Mrs Pearce make an extra strawberry tart for you!

Festive Fun!

We rounded out 2023 by celebrating the holiday season in style with good friends, good food and good fun! Not one but two festive happenings were thrown: one at Creates Bistro on 7th December, and one at Himalayan Lounge on 21st. Here are some of the highlights, feat. Margaret's Magnificent Millinery and two of Santa's elves having an 'Elf and Safety' dispute...



More from Our Members:

If you thought the creativity of MMT's performers ended with just our shows, think again! Here's a marvellous medley of some of the antics our members have gotten into since our last issue...

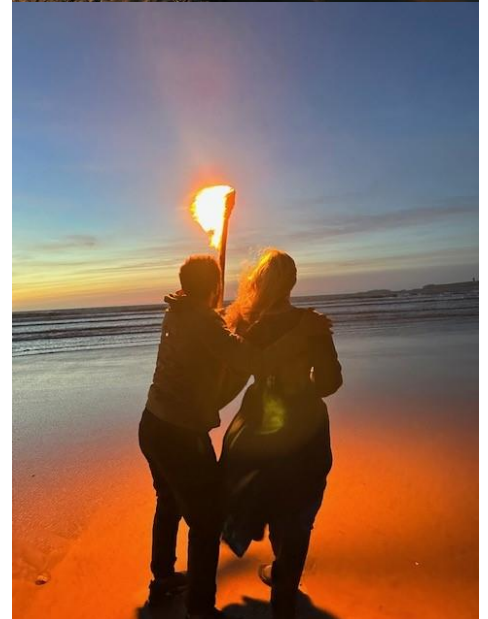


Our very own Eliza Doolittle, Holly Thody, is proud to present her first official music video: *The Dragonborn Comes/Main Theme* from the popular videogame *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*. It was "all made from a dream I woke up from and needed to create," Holly said.

The video has been over a year in the making, including writing the instrumental, recording vocals, outfit creation, storyboarding, travelling, filming and editing.

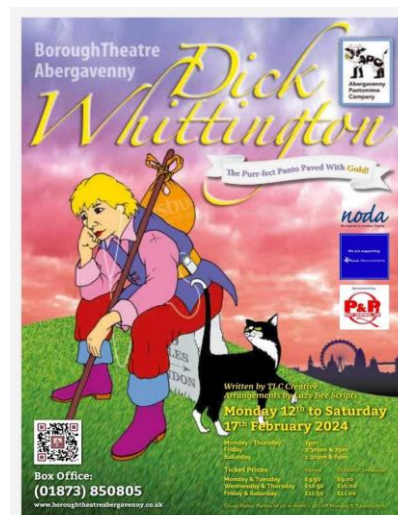
The filming itself took place over five days in Essaouira, Morocco, during which Holly performed all the stunts herself. "There were some hairy moments for sure," she said, "including fire on the windiest of days but of course the most important thing was... we got the shot!"

Holly's music is available on Spotify, Amazon Music, iTunes and Apple Music, and you can check out her epic new music video on YouTube [here](#)!



Turn again, Dick Whittington! Our lovely Cait Davies is putting her dance experience to good use, taking on the role of choreographer for Abergavenny Pantomime Company, the oldest pantomime company in Wales.

Their production of the classic family panto *Dick Whittington* runs from Monday 12th to Saturday 17th February at the Borough Theatre, Abergavenny – if you're not quite ready yet to let go of that festive feeling and are looking for a fun, family-friendly night out, this is one you won't want to miss!



On the lookout for another half term treat? Well 'Consider Yourself' covered, because our friends at Mayhem Youth Theatre are here to bring you one of the most popular musicals of all time: Lionel Bart's *Oliver!*

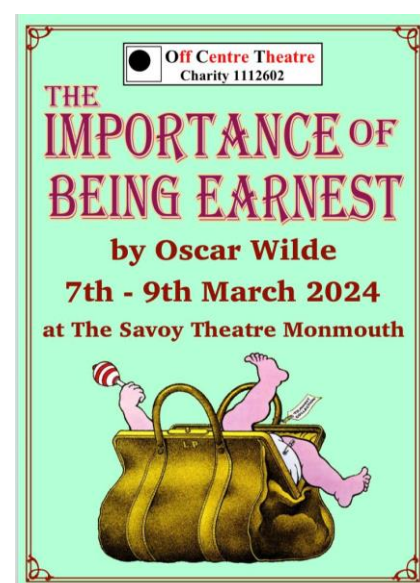
Directing this talented bunch is Andrew Griffiths, who last appeared with MMT in our 2022 fundraising cabaret *Sounds of America*, singing 'Mr Cellophane' from *Chicago*.

Oliver! runs from Thursday 15th to Saturday 17th February at the HMSG Theatre, and tickets are available online [here](#), or in physical form from Handyman House on Monnow St. Grab yours now to make sure you don't miss out on a wonderful show, guaranteed to make you say, "Please Mayhem, we want some more!"

Finally, no fewer than four of our members past and present have been cast in the famous Oscar Wilde classic *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Off Centre Theatre's latest production is described by the author as "a trivial comedy for serious people," and there's no doubt about it: this one is Wilde at his wickedly witty finest.

A chaotic romp through Victorian snobbery and pretension, the play resolutely refuses to take anything seriously except cucumber sandwiches – and, of course, the infamous Handbag...

You can catch Ruby Ravelle as Algernon Moncrieff, Becky Townsend as Cecily Cardew, Judith Rossiter as Miss Prism and Tony Wells as Lane the butler, along with their OCT castmates, at the Savoy from 7th to 9th March for an evening of secrets, trickery and true love.



You did it, you did it, you did it!

That's all, folks! If you've made it this far, thanks for coming along on another leisurely jaunt through all our exciting news – you know we at MMT provide only the very finest foolery for your delectation. We'd love to see as many people as possible fight to the death at the Second Coming of Quiz Night so please do get sharpening those braincells and come along to that – and of course to *My Fair Lady* in April, for those readers who aren't currently working feverishly on their tap, ballroom and Cockney accent skills! It's shaping up to be a fantastic show and we can't wait to share it with you all. As ever, tickets are available where all good tickets can be found! (The Savoy website. Obviously.) I now declare submissions for the next issue officially open: if you're in a stagey thing and you want people to come see it, or you've done an artsy thing and you're real proud of it, we want to hear from you! Come delight me at **m.maturin@outlook.com** to get your thing published.

To all in *My Fair Lady*, wishing you “faith, hope, and a little bit of luck” for the show!

Meriwether