



A note from the Chairman

As I write this, we have recently learned of the sad loss of our former President, Lyn Woodruff. I have Lyn to thank for introducing me to BOS – and I will always be grateful to her for that. She was always so welcoming, so kind and so incredibly thoughtful and supportive. The way she touched my life – and that of many others, will not be forgotten. She was much loved by all who knew her, and she will be sadly missed. And, if there is a heavenly choir, I am sure she will already be telling them to 'Give it some welly!'.

Shakespeare and Love has been put to bed and we have now begun our rehearsals for *Kiss Me Kate*. Life in the Operatic Society revolves around our shows and we are always looking forward to what's coming up next. But before we leave the concert behind, I want to thank everyone who took part – the cast, production team, the ladies in the kitchen, lighting, sound, box office, front of house, bar, cloth crew and chair transporters, people who donated raffle prizes – you all know who you are and on behalf of the Society I want you to know that what you do is very much appreciated us and our audiences.

I am confident that *Kiss Me Kate* is going to be a wonderful show – we have an excellent production team - and I encourage as many of you as possible to be part of the cast or, if you can't, why not help out backstage or with wardrobe or props? That way you can keep in touch with your friends and be part of the show.

I am delighted to announce we have a new production team for our YOBOS 2013 show, which will be *Seussical The Musical*. Ben Coleman (who has appeared on stage with us in *The Boyfriend* and *Fiddler on the Roof*) and Robbie Fell will be directing and choreographing the show respectively. Those of you who saw this year's production of *RENT* will remember Robbie's amazing performance as Angel. Everyone is looking forward to working with them.

Don't forget a very important date for your diary – the BOS Christmas Party – which is on Saturday 8th December 2012 at Adderbury Bowls Club. Tickets, which cost £11 to include an excellent buffet supper and disco, will be on sale very soon!

Thursday 20th December (7.30pm) will be our annual visit to The Easington to sing Christmas carols. We will also take a collection for Katherine House Hospice. If you want to take part, please let me know as soon as you can. Because space will be limited we have to restrict the number of people singing to no more than 15.

We have agreed to perform a concert in Marlborough Road Methodist Church next October in aid of Katherine House Hospice. I have agreed to pull this together and will let you know the date as soon as I can. There will be concentrated rehearsals from September up to the concert in October. We won't be singing with books, so if you are up for the challenge - I would love to hear from you.

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From the Editor ...

Welcome to the October/November issue of *TopNote*. Once again a warm thank you to everyone who has taken time out to contribute towards this issue, especially as October has been a very busy month for us all.

This issue sees a review of the October Concert, by Gareth Williams; we put Jenny Tustian under the spotlight in a 60 second interview, as well as submissions from Gareth Jeremy and Lloyd and Kim Taylor on Twinning and our visitors from Hennef during the weekend of the Banbury Canal Day.

Website

Please check the BOS website as regularly as you can it contains lots of great information on the shows we perform, past, present and future, social events, and news of the Society. We often post rehearsal times so if you are in the next show *Kiss Me Kate* do check the site for a reminder. We'll be shortly changing the look of the BOS website with a new design, and adding more pictures. Thank you for your feedback in previous months on suggestions for improvements for the site. It's been a gradual process but we hope you like the changes so far.

Birthday Greetings



Many happy returns to Emily Sloan, Mel Austin and Lee Dwyer who celebrated their birthdays in October, and we wish Tom and Charlotte Boardman and Dan Wainman a happy birthday as they become another year older during November. If we have missed you out, please don't be offended but instead let us know the month of your birthday so we can wish you well. If you're really lucky and happen to be celebrating your birthday on a rehearsal night then you might be treated to our special BOS company version of Happy Birthday complete with four, five, possibly more part harmonies.

Keep in touch

We do our best to keep in touch with all BOS Members via the website, *TopNote*, email and telephone and of course in person at rehearsals, but we might not always catch if and when you change your email address or other contact details.

We'll be putting together an updated Member's Book in the New Year so if your details are currently not in the 'Blue Book' or they are but need changing, please let our Membership Secretary, Rodney Henn know as soon as you can. We can then be confident that we will be providing you with an accurate record of BOS Member contacts.

Jonathan Rubery
Editor



75 Years not out

At the BOS Barn Dance earlier in the year, two members were awarded NODA long service awards. They were: David Hornsby, 25 years, and Adrian Hearn, 50 years. So that's 75 years' service to BOS between them. Quite an achievement, I am sure you agree, and one that is to be celebrated.

David first appeared in *The Pirates of Penzance* in 1986 and has performed in many of our productions since, either as a chorus member or in a principal role. Oddly enough, Adrian's first show was also *Pirates* – this time in 1961 (were you there then?) and he has been a stalwart member of the Society ever since.

From what they tell me, it seems that neither Adrian nor David have been unduly worn down by the rigours, stresses and strains of operatic life – apart from (age-related) hair loss. Gentlemen – I spare your blushes here and will say no more!

Adrian tells me he is undecided whether to venture on stage anymore – but I've seen him at the rehearsals for *Kiss Me Kate*. And he has assured me that he will certainly be available for concerts and to help out front of house if he isn't on stage.

Thank you Adrian and David for all you have done – and continue to do – for the Society.

Sally-Anne Watts
Chairman



October Concert - *Shakespeare and Love* Review

BOS always does such a great job with its fully staged performances – the staging, costumes, lighting – that the concert performances can sometimes struggle to achieve the same impact, and it was with this in mind that I came along to the Friday night performance of ‘Shakespeare and Love’. The other thing to admit now is that I was asked to write a review after the event and so made no notes during the performance – which probably meant I enjoyed myself more and paid more attention to the cast, but puts you at the mercy of my memory. The initial request was to produce something ‘like a NODA report’. Now I always enjoy reading these but I always get to the end with the feeling that the author has had the brief to say something nice about everyone who was listed which gives a boost to the performers but doesn’t necessarily give anyone any pointers for improvement. However, as this is my first attempt at being a music critic I also know that my continuing enjoyment of my BOS membership is dependent on not upsetting anyone (or at least not too many people) and so I would like simply to recognise my highlights of the evening as something to which we should all aspire.

Firstly, Elena Saroka’s music direction and conducting was excellent and the attention to detail particularly in the full ensemble pieces really lifted the performances – with crisp, unison consonants at the end of words and a real feel for the dynamics of the pieces. The best of the ensemble pieces was ‘Love Changes Everything’ which was performed to end the first half – this is the sort of musicality which we sometimes forget about when combined with movement on stage.

Of the smaller ensemble pieces, Richard Talbott and Charlotte Saunders gave a great performance of the duet ‘Tonight’ from ‘West Side Story’. Charlotte sang the role of Maria with real conviction and demonstrated a good range with clear top notes, and most importantly, made it appear effortless – keeping in character and not letting the concentration show in the face. The dialogue towards the end of the piece was tenderly done and I could almost see Richard climbing out of the window to leave...

Having heard Emily Sloane sing over a number of years at the Banbury Young Musician’s events, I last heard her sing a lead in the YOBOS performance of ‘Hairspray’. She has come on tremendously since then and ‘I Feel Pretty’ was a great performance but particularly strong vocally and one of the highlights of the first act. The supporting girls really got into character quickly and obviously relished the opportunity for some acting.

I probably shouldn’t admit to this, but I have never seen ‘Oliver!’ (I hope this doesn’t mean that my membership gets revoked) and Elysia Roadnight’s assured performance of ‘Where is Love?’ was great.

Altos often feel overlooked but you could never say that of Sarah Kennedy who had both musicality and stage presence in the role of the wandering girlfriend in ‘Always True to You’. Jonathan Rubery did a good job playing the role of the put-upon boyfriend only too willing to forgive.

When the whole ensemble got up to sing ‘Love me Tender’ I was intrigued as to how it might be interpreted, but what might have appeared to be an overwhelmingly large backing group actually gave a well-balanced performance which had presence without timidity and was well matched by Richard Talbott’s full rich baritone. As always, Richard combined projection with pronunciation and a hint of accent so that the audience could hear and understand the words as well as feel the transported at least part way across the Atlantic.

Projection and pronunciation again, this time from Philip Fine, and he did both in two very enjoyable renditions of his own compositions setting Shakespeare’s Sonnets to music. They were both very different styles (perhaps a hint of Stanford in the first piece?) and performed simply and effectively. In ‘If I Can’t Love’ the director was wise to leave out the action and leave Philip’s voice to generate the right mix of emotions that the beast is feeling – anger, despair, love, (are there actually any emotions that this song doesn’t cover?).

Sally-Anne Watts made the most of the performance opportunities with good movement and interaction in the smaller group numbers. ‘Another Op’nin’, Another Show’ made a rousing start to the show with plenty of energy and a nice way to get the ensemble onto the stage with the layout that the Methodist Church presents. The narration worked well through the show too as a way of linking the sections as well as the pieces within the sections.

Just one criticism and that was the inclusion of ‘Everybody ought to have a Maid’ which, when taken out of the context of ‘A Funny Thing Happened on the way to the Forum’, appears to be more about sexual harassment than love.

So to respond to my opening paragraph, ‘Shakespeare and Love’ was a great show with every bit as much entertainment as a fully staged production.

A huge thank you to BOS member, Gareth Williams, who kindly gave up his time to write a review of *Shakespeare and Love*.

Twining of Banbury with Hennef

Twining in Banbury began on 26th October 1978, at a public meeting held at the Postgraduate Education Centre, Horton Hospital. The late Mayor of Banbury, Councillor Ron Smith, also at the time, a VP of our Society called the meeting, which was attended by twenty-four people. A committee was formed, constitution drawn up, and the link was made.

In March 1980, we also linked with Ermont in France. Both towns have been 'Twinned' with Banbury ever since. But how did the Operatic Society get involved, you ask? Well it's a long story.....

A small male choir, *The Battered Husbands Group*, comprising the late Dickie Briggs, Gareth Jeremy, Tom Pratt, Philip Shaw, OBE, and Eric Woodruff, met regularly each Friday at 10.00pm to play dominoes in a local hostelry. One evening they espied a lonely person at the pub and invited him to join them. He was Matthias Schwellenbach, who was in this country from Germany, working for Fords at Dagenham. We discovered we had something in common, we all enjoyed singing. Matthias invited an advance party of three of us over to his home town of Hennef. We had a very enjoyable weekend and it was decided that we would take a Variety Concert over to Hennef in October 1984. There are many choirs in the area in and around Hennef, but no Operatic Society, or similar society. Three people from that first concert in 1984 are still active in the Society today – can you see who they are from the photo? The trip was very successful, and since then the Society has taken a number of productions to Hennef including *The Mikado*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Iolanthe* (they do like their G&S!), *Old Tyme Music Hall*, *Anything Goes*, *Songs and Snatches* and various *variety concerts*. On each occasion Philip Shaw has been the Musical Director. The links that some of us have made are ongoing and the friendship has been outstanding.

I have been treasurer of the Twining Association since 1980, and know of some of the difficulties we encounter. For Canal Day on Sunday, 7th October 2012, we had 56 visitors from Hennef, and 11 from Ermont who came for the weekend. Can you imagine the difficulties we had in hosting that number? They brought a Brass Band of 26 Young people, who played at the Canal Day festivities, and were excellent (See Lloyd and Kim Taylor's article on this below).

I know all our members who went to Hennef to perform in *Iolanthe* enjoyed their visit. Do you think it is possible for some of you to consider joining the Association? It is not that expensive, £6 OAP, £10 ordinary, £15 husband and wife, £12 Senior Citizens. As part of your membership you will receive the Newsletter and information about what Twining is trying to do. I know it is impossible for everyone to host, but perhaps some of you could? On this last visit we had to put 39 individuals into the Holiday Inn. As you can appreciate some of us were asked, couldn't the Operatic Society help? Jenny Tustian is the Twining Association's Membership Secretary, and I am the Treasurer. Please talk to us if you are interested in finding out more about becoming a member of if you might be in a position to host future visits. Thank you to everyone who hosted on this occasion and those who have hosted in the past.



A warm thank you to long-standing BOS member, Gareth Jeremy, for writing this article and for enlightening us on our historical relationship with Hennef.

Banbury Canal Day 2012

Banbury welcomed people from our twin towns Hennef, Germany and Ermont, France for the Canal Day weekend. Visitors included the Mayor of Hennef, Klaus Pipke and the big band 'Heavy Tunes' from the Hennef comprehensive school under the leadership of Astrid Kroeger Schoenbach. The band members are 12 to 16 years old and they did a fantastic job of entertaining people at the Town Hall on Saturday evening at Mayor Tony Illott's reception, at the opening ceremony of Canal Day, outside The Mill and at Sovereign Wharf. They played rousing tunes like the James Bond theme, Hawaii Five-O and many other favourites. Canal day itself was a lovely sunny day but a bit on the chilly side. A lot of the youngsters had not been to England before so it was a great experience for them. They also visited Canterbury and the 'Harry Potter Walk' in Oxford as part of a very busy weekend. Banbury Twinning Association had a stand at Canal Day with information and food to try from Germany and France. Many thanks to the generous hosts who looked after visitors.

Thank you to Lloyd and Kim Taylor for their time in giving us a snapshot of the weekend, and for providing the pictures below.



Box office news

Our box office went on-line for Shakespeare and Love – and we were delighted to find that almost a third of our ticket sales were completed via our on-line box office, operated by NODA (National Operatic and Dramatic Association). Feedback from those who had used the service was extremely positive.

Watch out for our December issue of *TopNote*, when we will announce when tickets for *Kiss Me Kate* will go on sale. Why not buy some as Christmas presents?

60 Second Interview

We interviewed Founder BOS Member Jenny Tustian.



What made you join BOS?

I didn't exactly join BOS it sort of evolved around two school productions of G&S with Banbury Cross Players and local teachers taking the principal roles; they were successful and a decision was made to start the Banbury Operatic Society in 1961 and the rest, as they say, is history! I have had 51 years of great fun and friendship over all these years.

What is your favourite show and why?

The Merry Widow by Franz Lehar would be one of my favourite shows, the music is so singable, costumes fab, and I have often chosen to sing Vilia from this show in concert MANY times, and any G&S.

What do you like to do in your spare time when you are not rehearsing for the next BOS concert/show?

Spare time, not a lot, still work up to three days a week demonstrating any product in Morrisons, invigilating at school exams, designing makeup for many productions in this area, gardening, cooking and having fun with six grandchildren.

Tell us something unusual or unique about yourself that people might not be aware of?

Love cooking. Both my two sons are executive head chefs. I enjoy making special anniversary and wedding cakes to order with hand-made sugar craft flowers, takes hours and hours, petal by petal. I once kayaked down the Ardeche Gorge in France in tandem with my son, through rapids and high gorge cliffs. It took over 6 hours, with winds cutting across the water, and I have the photo to prove it!

What is your favourite book?

Love a good book, wide choices but at the moment anything by Sophie Kinsella

What is your favourite animal and do you have any pets?

When we were in farming we bred Jack Russell pups. We sadly lost Holly and haven't felt ready for another dog at the moment.

What films do you like to watch?

Must have a good story, little violence, period drama preferred.

What is your favourite food?

Salmon any way it can be put on a plate.

Which stars of the big screen do you admire?

I admire anyone who can always completely be into a character, Judy Dench, Maureen Lipman, Julie Walters in *Mamma Mia* was fab and Sean Connery never makes a poor film.

Where is your favourite holiday destination?

Just started cruising, it's such a civilised way of seeing many cities and beautiful destinations...I sound like an advert now ... but Malta has some amazing history and lovely people who speak English and they drive on the right!

Jenny says that singing for her is always such a pleasure; she is in three choirs as well as BOS and BCP.

'Perhaps I just like being extrovert in a glam costume' – I think we can all relate to that! *Thanks to Jenny for taking the time to tell us a little bit more about her. Watch out for next month's issue when we put another BOS Member under the spotlight!*

Wine Tasting

SH Jones will be holding their annual Christmas Wine Tasting evening on Friday, 23 November 2012. The evening is always good fun and very popular with BOS members. They will have a great range of wines and will also be showing off some other seasonal drinks from spirits and liqueurs to ales. A chance for you to sample a few drinks and get some early Christmas presents in!

Time: 7.00 pm to 9.00 pm

Location: The Cellar Shop, Tramway Road, Banbury

If you would like to attend please email the Social Committee Chairman, Richard Watts. richard.watts@agriclaims.co.uk or telephone **01295 750880**. The wine tasting is £5.00 per person.

Members' news

We are pleased to welcome three new members to the society who auditioned on Monday, 29 October 2012. Congratulations and welcome to BOS to:

Amanda Anderson

Gillian Purcell

Dave Smith

Christmas Party – Date for your Diary!

Following the success of last year, the BOS Christmas party will take place on Saturday, 8 December 2012, at the Adderbury Bowls Club. Start time is 7.30 pm, finishing at midnight.

The cost for the evening is £11.00 per person to include an excellent buffet supper and great disco and –a must for all new members – your chance to take part in the infamous hat game!

It will be a great night so please let us know if you would like to attend by emailing the Social Committee Chairman, Richard Watts. richard.watts@agriclaims.co.uk or telephone **01295 750880** or sign up to the event as usual via the 'blue folder' at rehearsals.

Darts at the RAFA - 'And Bully's special prize!... a speed boat!...look at what you would have won'

Sorry, a little reminisce there to that much-loved, family-favourite *Bullseye* hosted by Jim Bowen between 1981 and 1995' You may remember his catch-phrase "Super, smashing, great". Well, we can't promise a speedboat but we can certainly promise a super, smashing, great BOS social evening of darts on Friday, 9th November at 7.30 pm. If you would like to join in the fun please let our Social Committee know in the usual way.

£2 per person as a contribution towards a selection of nibbles on the night.

Fancy going out?

[The Harlequins, Cropredy, present *Calendar Girls*](#)

Thursday 8th – Saturday 10th November 2012, Village Hall, Cropredy

[Banbury Cross Players present *Calendar Girls*](#)

Friday, 23 November to Saturday, 1 December 2012, The Mill Arts Centre, Banbury

[Bicester Choral & Operatic Society present *The Magic Lamp*](#),

Wednesday, 21 November to Saturday, 24 November 2012, The Cooper School, Bicester

[Bartholomew Players present 'It Runs in the Family'](#), a

hilarious farce by Ray Cooney. Wednesday, 28 November to Saturday, 1 December 2012, Eynsham Village Hall

[Oxford Operatic Society, presents *Disney's Beauty & the*](#)

[Beast](#), Tuesday, 27 November to Saturday, 1 December 2012, The New Theatre, Oxford



Dates for your diary

9 th Nov	Darts at the RAFA
23 rd Nov	Wine tasting at SH Jones wines cellar shop
8 th Dec	BOS Christmas Party, Adderbury Bowls Club