



Newsletter Autumn 2020

Welcome to our autumn 2020 newsletter, keeping you in touch with what's happening at Stewartby Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society and our friends in other societies.

This is an electronic newsletter which can be delivered automatically to your email inbox or downloaded from the website. To sign up, go to

www.saods.org.uk, scroll to the bottom of the page and enter your email address. We promise that we will not use your email address for any purpose other than the delivery of the newsletter.

Coronavirus

At the recent meeting of the Stewartby Operatic Society Committee there was a long discussion about if or when to restart rehearsals in view of the survey of members, as mentioned in the last newsletter, and most recent guidelines from the government. The headline news is that rehearsals will recommence in January 2021. There are more details of the results of the survey and of the steps to be taken prior to recommencement later in this newsletter. All this, of course, is subject to changes in guidelines and regulations as the coronavirus pandemic continues.

In the meantime please continue to look after yourselves.

Many thanks to those who have contributed to this edition of the newsletter. If you would like to send in something for the next newsletter please email your text(s) and /or image(s) to stewartbyoperatic@saods.org.uk.

Singalong time with Colin Jones

In the last newsletter I invited you to send your recordings of yourself singing the Stewartby round so that I could use technology to put the massed voices together. In the end I had to limit it to four voices (because that's how many people did it!) but the spectacular result is now online for you to see and hear at <https://youtu.be/6kj67EFdmPo>

TREAD THE BOARDS Theatre Group



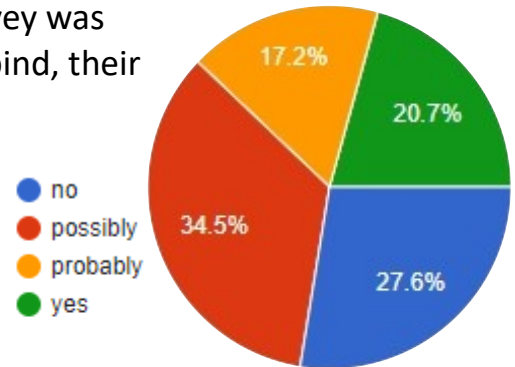
Our performances on stage in Milton Keynes have been curtailed this year.

We hope we will be back performing live in 2021. In the meantime we have undertaken a lockdown project to learn some new skills with video. This has enabled the members of the group to keep learning and developing. You can find 10 short videos featuring solo performances at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNXfMUYzsXoe8oGaBz_wEsA/

Member Survey

Almost 70% of those who were contacted completed the online survey. Since the middle of September, when the survey was sent out, and even more so since the consultation closed the rate of coronavirus infection has worsened so some members may have changed their minds about their responses. As was stated when the survey was issued, the Committee used the results to guide, but not bind, their decision making.

Members responded to the question “If rehearsals resumed at Stewartby Church Hall in October would you consider attending?”



Of the 72.4% of respondents who said possibly, probably or yes to considering attending rehearsals the majority declared that they were willing to sing, but preferably not whilst wearing face coverings, to sing music for future concerts and to sing Christmas music.

The full results of the survey can be found by going to the Stewartby Operatic Society website at www.saods.org.uk and following the coronavirus links.

Greetings from Jenny Hall

Our holiday to India was inspired by a young man named Neil Cooper whom I had known from babyhood. When he sold his business 'Coopers of Stortford' a few years ago he made a lot of money and he and his wife, Kate, decided to help some very poor Indian children with their education. The children lived in immense poverty in villages in the middle of a jungle in south India. Although they did go to school they had nowhere to do their homework as the tiny huts they lived in had no electricity and were totally unsuitable. This prompted Neil and Kate to build five tuition centres – one in each village. They kitted them all out with desks, blackboards and other educational necessities and a teacher/helper as well to supervise and help the children after school. In order to help with the continued



running of these establishments they set up a charity called 'Grace Charitable Trust' and each year they organised a holiday at a hotel set right in the middle of the jungle. Everyone who went on these holidays paid a sum of money for the holiday and an equal amount to the charity. I felt so proud of them and what they were doing to help these very poor children that we decided to support them and we booked to go in February 2020.

I had grown up in South India and had always dreamt of taking my two girls there. Very tragically, Neil went out just before Christmas last year, to take presents to the children and was taken very ill and died at the age of 58. I was absolutely devastated that someone who was doing so much good should have been taken so sadly and suddenly. We all thought the holiday would be cancelled but, very bravely, his wife decided that it would still go on and so we went.

We flew to Bangalore first and visited many of the familiar places of my childhood including the church we attended and my old school. We had pre-arranged the school visit and they welcomed us with open arms, laying on a splendid tea party for us. Walking around the school and grounds was very nostalgic, I had really loved that school.

After a few short days in Bangalore we were on our way to the jungle hotel – a six hour journey by car! Our accommodation was in very well appointed units dotted around the area right in the heart of the jungle. It was such a wonderful experience as we could lie in bed in the early mornings and watch the animals around: deer, monkeys, wild boar and we even saw quite a few wild elephants. Sadly and disappointingly, although we were told there were 55 tigers in the area, we did not see a single one.



Each day we were taken on trips to places of interest including the local schools, villages and all the tuition centres. The visits to the villages were a really humbling experience. The huts were very small, dark and with hardly any furniture in them. The tiny windows had no glass and everywhere was extremely dirty. There were many domesticated animals



roaming around with all the accompanying mess they produce. The people seemed so happy, however, and the children were simply delightful, always smiling and so excited with our visit. On one of the days a sports competition had been organised between all the villages. There was great rivalry and the winning village children were all presented with cups which you would have thought were made of solid gold for the pleasure it gave them. It was a truly wonderful spectacle to watch and be part of.

The next stage of our holiday was to Goa where we stayed at a family run hotel that Neil had recommended. This was a really relaxing few days to soak in the warmth, enjoy the sights, the food, the shopping and just generally chill out, before returning home to a very cold late February! Shortly after we returned we had lockdown. We couldn't believe how lucky we had been to have managed to complete the holiday. My daughter summed it up by saying it had been the holiday of a lifetime! It had been a great time for us all, and had fulfilled a lifelong dream of mine.

Kate Garraway

The Society was saddened to learn of the recent death of Kate Garraway. Kate last performed with the Society in the chorus of The Yeomen of the Guard in 2011 and The Pirates of Penzance in 2010 (pictured). Our thoughts are with her family and friends.



Back to Rehearsals

The plan is to resume rehearsals in January 2021. In order to do so (under the regulations in force at the end of October 2020) the Society has produced a document setting out all the steps and precautions that will be put in place to allow members to rehearse safely. Stewartby United Church Council have also produced documents to ensure that, as far as possible, the church hall is Covid-safe.

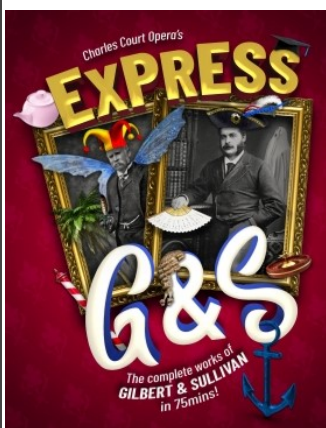
Please read these documents to ensure that you are happy to return. They can be found online at the Society's web site at www.saods.org.uk and follow the coronavirus links. The ultimate decision is yours, however, and you must NOT attend rehearsals if you do not agree with the measures being put in place. The important point to remember is that rehearsals, unlike pre-Covid, cannot be social gatherings (where the rule of six applies indoors). It may be possible to socialise before and after rehearsals, outside the hall, as long as government guidelines are adhered to.

At the time of writing this another lockdown has been announced in England which may change future planning.



The Importance of Amateur Theatre: Where would we be without it?

NODA have produced a letter extolling the cultural, economic and welfare benefits of amateur theatre. They would like as many people as possible to send a copy of the letter to their MP to highlight the plight of amateur societies at this time. The letter is posted on the Society's web site at www.saods.org.uk and follow the coronavirus links.



Charles Court Opera

Get ready to be swept away from Penzance to Titipu, from Venice to the Tower of London, from Portsmouth to Fairyland, as we stumble through the entire G&S canon in what promises to be a highly inventive, witty performance suitable for all ages.

at The Pleasance Theatre, London 17th - 22nd November

at The Maltings Theatre, St Albans 24th - 28th November

Click the poster image for more details.

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