

YEovil  
AMATEUR  
OPERATIC  
SOCIETY

PRESENTS

# FOLLIES

4th-8th  
October 2005



## Fantastic Follies dance up a storm

**MAKING** his first Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society directorial debut with Follies is seasoned musical theatre director Bryan Hallett.

Thirty nine year old Bryan, who lives in East Lambrook, worked for twenty years as an avionics engineer at Westlands. He is now pursuing a full time career in the arts, and writes and performs murder mystery plays with his own company Murder To Measure.

Assistant director on previous Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society shows including *Mo and My Girl*, *Carnetot*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *My Fair Lady*; he has also played several lead roles for them, most notably *Mo-Ko* in *The Mikado*.

"A love of performing was bred into Bryan from an early age, as his parents were enthusiastic members of Bridgewater Pantomime Society. Later on Bryan wrote and directed Gang shows for Castle Cary Scouts and Guides and graduated into directing three shows at the Octagon for Yeovil Amateur Pantomime Society. He has worked with many local societies, including the Swan Theatre Company, Yeovil Musical Comedy Society, Ilminster Entertainment Society and Down Valley Players.

This is the first time Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society have performed Follies. He knows and loves the show, and wants to achieve spectacle and emotional depth as well as build upon the strengths of the society. He says "A lot of shows have male leads and are chiefly about men. Women are either incidental, or play their lovers. This show has wonderful lead roles for women".

Several of the songs in Follies are deliberate pastiches of 1940s songs by Cole Porter, Jerome Kern and George Gershwin, and there are some classic numbers such as *Losing My Mind*, a version of which by Liza Minnelli and the *Pet Shop Boys* made the top ten of the UK charts. There's also *I'm Still Here*, a precursor to *I Will Survive*, the *God Why Don't You Love Me Blues*, and *Broadway Baby* amongst many others.

"This is the defining show for Sondheim addicts", says Bryan. "Different



**MR DIRECTOR:** Director Bryan Hallett makes his directorial debut with Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society.

from anything he has done before, here he experiments with musical comedy form, and explores what can be done with it. He took the genre one step further".

A Sondheim musical means intelligent plot and lyrics as well as challenging music, and the sheer spectacle of Follies will charm even the cynics.

The leads are women, and older women at that - something an amateur company has in abundance, and their talents are often under used. There are plenty of cameo roles, particularly for the older members - and they nearly all get a song. There are also strong parts for younger players, with challenging dancing and songs. Tap dancing numbers and glitz abound!

Shows like *Chicago* and the film *Moulin Rouge* all take their inspiration from Follies, the scale of which when it first appeared was unprecedented, and another great thing is the age range of the characters. Bryan has a cast of fifty to direct, and there are plum roles for several of them as the lead characters are seen as their younger and older selves, so there are



**HIGH KICKING:** The girls of the Weismann Follies in their heyday.

parts for the younger and more mature members. "An amateur society often has a wide age range and it's not often one finds a show that offers such great roles and sole opportunities for so many of the performers", says Bryan.

Matching up the younger actors with credible versions of themselves when older was a bit difficult but Bryan thinks they've been quite fortunate in getting believable pairings.

There are four main characters in Follies: Ben, played by popular Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society regular Colin Martin; Sally, played by newcomer Liz Jackson; Buddy, played by the versatile Duncan Wright; and Phyllis, played by the captivating Vivienne Evans. The senior ladies all get to do some showstopping numbers and of course Follies is famous for its breathtakingly audacious big dance numbers, choreographed by Sheila Driver.

The title Follies is an obvious pun, dealing both with dancing girls, and with human folly. The show is a mixture of musical and play so lovers of drama as well as spectacle will not be disappointed. There's certainly something for everyone in this show.

when Ben left Sally for Phyllis, and Sally married the adoring Buddy.

Sondheim's show follows the fortunes of these two couples who find themselves confronting the ghosts of their former selves as they struggle to accept the present and stop chasing elusive, often distorted pipe dreams. Decades on, their lives are falling apart.

Each emotionally estranged from their partner, they bewail their present lives and look back at a past cloaked in rose tinted nostalgia.

Sondheim's lyrics are witty and intelligent, and the show is a heady mixture of dazzling dance numbers like *Broadway Baby*, and plaintive torch songs like *Losing My Mind*.

★ YEovil AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY PRESENTS

# FOLLIES

4th-8th OCTOBER '05  
Octagon Theatre, Yeovil

**Director**  
BRYAN HALLETT

**Musical Director**  
VIVIANNE MERRIFIELD

**Choreographer**  
SHEILA DRIVER

**Music & lyrics**  
by Stephen Sondheim.

**Book** by James Goldman.

**Directed originally**  
on Broadway by Harold Prince.

**Produced in the West End** at London by Cameron Mackintosh.

**Tickets on Sale**  
**Octagon**  
**Box Office:**  
**01935 422884**

**SEATS:**  
CENTRE TIER - £12,  
SIDE TIER - £10, TUESDAY 4th  
& SATURDAY MATINEE - £8

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with JOSEF WEINBERGER LIMITED on behalf of MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL of New York.

### Show synopsis

STEPHEN Sondheim's landmark musical is set in 1971 in a condemned theatre, where impresario Dimin Weismann, the thinly disguised legend Flo Ziegfeld, throws a reunion party for the Weismann Girls who, resident in their famously over-the-top feather headresses and opulent sequined costumes, danced up a storm in the Follies revues from 1918 to 1941.

The first part of this simultaneously tearful and joyous party gives each of the guests a chance to step into the limelight for a nostalgic musical reminiscence. The plot concerns two 1941 Follies girls, Sally and Phyllis, and their husbands Buddy and Ben, for whom the return to the theatre exacerbates the marital problems that began thirty years ago