



YAOS presents HMS PINAFORE

4th - 9th October



President cherishes fond memories for new show

ONE of the many friendly faces greeting visitors to Yeovil's latest YAOS production will be current president Roger Howell, whose association with the group goes back a full 42 years.

"My very first experience of amateur dramatics involved the smell of grease paint - an impression which has stuck with me ever since," says Roger, who was first introduced to the world of theatre by a friend in Bath.

"It made a welcome distraction from the world of banking, and my previous experience as a member of a church choir was something that I knew I could build on."

Obviously a quick learner, Roger's first show at Bath's Theatre Royal found him singing in the chorus, before landing the lead male role in the very next production. In 1962 his bank moved him to Yeovil, where it was a lady calling at the enquiry desk who persuaded him to give YAOS a go.

"I was a little reluctant at first, because I was still committed to the Bath Light Operatic Group at that point, but Olive Edwards was a persistent lady and I'm very pleased that she was, because it would open a whole new world to me that I would never have otherwise known."

"My first YAOS audition was for Oklahoma and I was pleased to be a chorus member for a couple of years, as being involved in two theatre groups while trying

to juggle a career, was an interesting challenge."

Fate had dealt him a busy hand, as Theatre Royal rehearsals nights were on Tuesdays and Thursdays, while YAOS' times happened to fall on the other three nights of the week.

"Moving to Yeovil at that time was a real eye opener for me, with some genuine local musical legends to learn from, led by the amazing Lilian Dunkley, who taught me so much about empathy for roles and translating my grounding in church music to the stage."

"We stayed close personal friends right up to her death at the age of 92 and it was an honour to sing with YAOS at her gala show in the midlands, where she was every bit as well known as in the Yeovil area."

Lilian's influence clearly made its mark, as Roger went on to win a regional NODA Rose Bowl award for best male performer in a Gilbert and Sullivan production - making it fitting that he should be presiding over the Gilbert and Sullivan show of HMS Pinafore during his time as president of YAOS. The group also won a Most Improved Society award during Roger's other life as a musical director.

In 1966, Roger decided that two theatre commitments needed to be trimmed down to one and naturally decided to focus on Yeovil. Among a host of lead roles that he has played over the

years, Roger says that the complex character of Billy Bigelow in Carousel was his favourite, closely followed by a very different performance required in The Merry Widow.

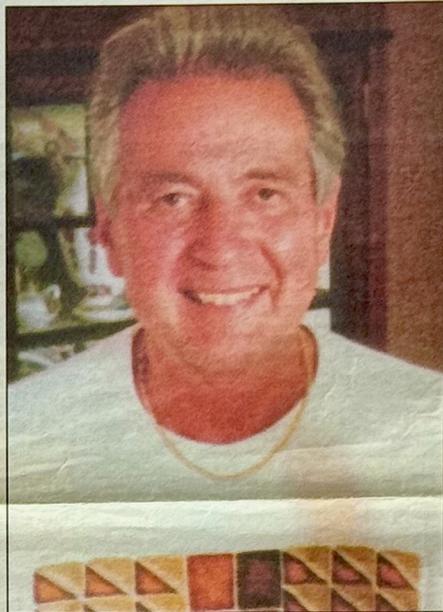
HMS Pinafore will bring back fond memories for Roger. "The first time we did this I played the leading tenor role and I was due to take more of a back seat the second time round, by which I was living in Devon."

"Then Thelma Parish rang me up saying there had been a problem and could I play the role again, which I was very happy to do, despite the to-ing and fro-ing from Sidmouth."

"From what I've seen, we're set for a sparkling new and longer production, set this time on a World War Two battleship with dancing and an augmented musical score, along with some other fun adaptations brought in by director Alan Spencer."

So, was Roger tempted to step out one more time for the current production? "I still love to sing but I try and keep it a bit more low key these days, such as the occasional wedding or small gathering."

"But I'll be there at the Octagon, drinking in every moment and I can't wait to see how it all unfolds. Who knows, perhaps I'll get a whiff of that grease paint again as well."



PROUD PRESIDENT: Roger Howell has been with the Society for 42 years.



CAST AHOY: Members of YAOS' cast for the latest dazzling production of Gilbert and Sullivan's HMS Pinafore, get in the swing ahead of the opening curtain on 4 October. Set this time on a World War Two battleship, audiences remain transfixed as the story of Josephine's attempt to elope with Ralph unfolds. Tickets are on sale through the Octagon Theatre on 01935 422884.

YEovil AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY
presents Gilbert & Sullivan's

HMS PINAFORE

4th-9th October 2004
OCTAGON THEATRE, YEovil

A sparkling new production

Entire Production by: ALAN SPENCER
Musical Director: PETE HARRISON

Tickets On Sale at the Octagon Box Office from
13th September - 01935 422884

PERFORMANCES: NIGHTLY - 7.30 pm, SATURDAY MATINEE - 2.30 pm
SEATS: CENTRE TIER - £32, SIDE TIER - £40,
MON 4th & SATURDAY MATINEE - £8

