

The *love of theatre*

A musical group is celebrating more than four decades of captivating shows.



Worle Operatic and Dramatic Society (WODS) has come a long way since it burst onto Weston's theatrical scene in 1972.

In October of its founding year, WODS performed a concert version of Oklahoma! – and since then it has gone from strength to strength.

Member Chloe Helmore said: "Many members over the years have poured hours of blood, sweat and tears into each production, constantly striving for higher standards, each show or concert ebbing ever forward to professional standards."

The talented performers have treated audiences to shows such as My Fair Lady in 1975, Fiddler On The Roof in 1977 and Calamity Jane in 1983 at Worle Community School.

In 1984, WODS performed Finians Rainbow, produced by Betty Nicholas, at The Playhouse. Since then, it has enjoyed a yearly residency at the High Street venue.

Under the direction of Laura Grace, Priscilla Queen Of The Desert won rave reviews with its sell-out shows.

Laura also directed The Sound Of Music for the society in 2013 and Jesus Christ Super Star in 2014.

The group currently has more than 80 members, but it is always on the look-out for new talent.

Members meet on Wednesday nights at Mead Vale Community Hall.

WODS has just finished a successful production of A Midsummer Night's Dream at Theatre Tropicana.

Director Blair Ruddick presented a reimagining of one of Shakespeare's most magical stories.

The play involved audiences moving around the theatre space along with the actors to make the experience more interactive.

The hard-working group is now rehearsing for its autumn show, Oh! What A Lovely War, to commemorate the centenary of the end of World War One.

This production reunites the directors Aaron Pengelly and Blair Ruddick, who worked together on Hot Mikado in 2014 and Doctor Dolittle in 2016.

Oh! What a Lovely War is showing at The Blakehay Theatre from November 1-3 and tickets are available from www.ticketsource.co.uk/blakehaytheatre

WODS is no stranger to the Blakehay, first performing Sweet Charity at the venue back in 1995.

Blakehay audiences have enjoyed a string of shows including Godspell in 2008, Return to the Forbidden Planet in 2009 and more recently Made In

Dagenham in 2017 – under the direction of Bev Tyrrell and Lisa Frost.

Keen to support the community, WODS also takes part in many local events and activities.

One of these events was the Weston Armed Forces Weekend when performers re-enacted the enlistment of local men going to sign up for the great war in the Italian Gardens before telling the men's war stories on the beach lawns.

Members also sing at residential homes – an activity organised by Chloe Helmore.

If you are organising a charity event and would like some musical entertainment, then look no further than WODS.

To find out about becoming a member, get in touch with the group via Facebook under WorleOperatic.

Chloe added: "From 1972 to 2018 one thing connects us all – the love of theatre, in all its forms and that passion is what will keep WODS going for another 50 years." ■

Group: Worle Operatic and Dramatic Society

Formed: 1972

Base: Mead Vale Community Hall.

Membership: 80

Contact: at www.facebook.com/worleoperatic