

Productions in 2011

Autumn 2011 - 'Half A Sixpence'

An appreciative audience greeted the Opening Night of our autumn 2011 production with laughter and applause as we began the run of 'Half a Sixpence'. Immortalised by Tommy Steele in the title role, this tells the story of Kipps as he moves from poverty to riches and very nearly all the way back again, learning a lot about life along the way. Stella Brownsea was our musical director for this feast of traditional English musical theatre, with David Ludlow returning to be stage director after his success with 'Guys & Dolls', assisted again by Jenni Newman.

Show week continued in the same vein as Opening Night, with excellent performances right up to the final curtain leaving the Public Hall ringing with music to the delight of cast and patrons alike. Stella worked wonders to bring the best out of both principals and chorus and, in conjunction with the imaginative choreography of Jean Cator, ensured that the big production numbers buzzed with life and action. Her sensitive handling of the excellent band of musicians gave just the right level of support to the wistful solo numbers while providing attack and punch to the more raucous chorus work. The colourful costumes transported us back to a period where style really mattered, the stage crew ensured that every scene change was slick and unobtrusive, while sound and lights were effectively handled in the professional way we have now come to expect.

While it is perhaps unfair to single out individuals, it would be even more unfair not to mention the incredible performance given by Stephen Brown as our hero and leading man, Arthur Kipps. Hardly ever off stage, Stephen rose to the occasion magnificently - how he learnt it all we shall never know! Excellent support was given by Ruth Alder, who made a really convincing Ann, with every other person on stage, whether principal or chorus member, giving of their best. Truly a production of which the Society can be justly proud.

If you missed the show you really missed something special, so just to make sure you don't make the same mistake next time, for information on how to buy tickets for all our productions, [click here](#).

Looking back, it seems amazing that we only moved into our production venue, Beccles Public Hall, for a series of full run-throughs just a couple of weeks before Opening Night. This involved the cast in learning to negotiate their way round ever-increasing amounts of scenery and still remember their lines and moves while having spotlights shone in their eyes - not always easy! Next up were costume calls, to check that the vital pair of white gloves had not gone missing, and then the technical rehearsal to ensure that sound and lights were all fully up and working. Stella held her final band rehearsal, and then it was the sprint to the line - all set fair for a wonderful production, in fact!

Much earlier, the Preview Evening gave our Directors the chance to tell everyone about the plot and characters for this quintessentially English light comedy, and to play some of the well-known music from the show. The Read-Through brought out the humour in the show and allowed potential

principals to see just exactly what they were letting themselves in for! The Principals' Auditions gave the Audition Panel a number of problems when they had to decide between several excellent performances for a number of the parts, but in the end they all agreed on a wonderful cast list, as you can see:-

Kipps - Stephen Brown

Ann - Ruth Alder

Helen - Helen Roscoe

Shalford - Mike Catling

Chitterlow - Bob Sharman

Laura - Anna Fisher

Sid - Tom Elgie

Buggins - Calum Thompson

Pearce - David Johnson

Kate - Emily Johnson

Victoria - Bethan Roscoe

Flo - Georgia Chenery

Mrs Walsingham - Pat Newman

Young Walsingham - Steve Holmes

Young Kipps - Zak Poll

Young Ann - Alice Cushing

Duchess - Wendy Marshall

Gwendoline - Maggie Ludlow

Edith - Sorrel Adams

Jeremiah - David Whittle

A wonderful mix of experience and new fresh talent there, with several people making their debut either for the Society or as a principal player - well done to everyone!

Music rehearsals got under way in early June, with everyone having a great time under Stella's expert guidance. All too soon it was time to devote ourselves to staging the many scenes, and of course to see whether our feet could move at the same time as our mouths when we tried to get to grips with the routines devised by our choreographer Jean Cator. The first run-through of Act 1 showed us how far we still had to go (a very long way!) but at least there were definite signs of an

excellent show emerging out of the chaos. The next couple of months rushed past far too quickly, and all too soon Show Week was at last upon us!