



Proudly affiliated to the National Operatic and Dramatic Association (NODA)

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

There is no question of the importance of Amateur Theatre within our local communities. We have been entertaining the Ivers since 1926 but 2020 has prevented us doing what we'd normally do...

Across the UK, amateur theatre performing groups produce over 3500 productions annually which are watched by audience figures of more than 2 million every year. These performances include pantomimes, plays and musicals. We are proud to be part of the umbrella body, the National Operatic & Dramatic Association (NODA) The combined membership of this organisation is over 100,000 ranging in age from 8-80.

NODA's members groups generate between £150m - £200m in ticket sales with at least the same being produced in additional spending including; food, drink, travel and accommodation. The vast majority of this supports a wide range of businesses, including theatres, village and community halls, theatrical suppliers, restaurants, musicians, bars and hotels. Many groups also raise significant sums for local and national charities with post show collections and specific fundraising events.

Amateur theatre plays a significant part in the cultural life of the nation; helping with both physical and mental health, not just for the performers and all taking part, but for audiences too. Youngsters involved grow in confidence and self-esteem. Amateur theatre, in many smaller communities, is very often the hub of cultural activity as well as helping to bring communities together. Also worthy of note, is the fact that many professional performers and stars of TV, originally trod the boards in amateur theatre thus shaping them for more lucrative exploits ahead.

Amateur theatre also supports professional theatre as well. The venues amateur groups are hiring, mostly, are professional theatres and with that comes the employment of staff, both front of house and technical, as well as the hiring of freelancers i.e. choreographers, directors, musical directors, make-up artists etc.

At the present time, virtually all amateur theatre productions have been cancelled across the country, and given the lead time for productions, it is unlikely there will be many, if any, productions before the end of 2021. For The Richings Players, this meant postponing our planned June and October productions and it's looking increasingly unlikely that our traditional pantomime at the end of January will see the light of day. This is a significant loss to the cultural and economic life of the UK. As a non-for-profit, voluntary organisation, we have already seen a financial loss to our society because of the lockdown and Coronavirus pandemic. Rents, general running costs and overheads don't go away and although we always run tight budgets, this can't go on forever. Like us, many groups have been making use of technology to keep in touch, rehearse, or put together videos to entertain their audiences via social media channels. We are all eager to maintain involvement in some way and to resume a normal programme sooner rather than later.

We are grateful for the support you have shown our society and the Arts in general, but our plea to you and our Government today, is to PLEASE give the amateur theatre sector the same consideration as that of the professional theatres. The professional theatres are currently being highlighted in the press, but there is no mention of the amateur sector. A sector which does so very much for the wellbeing and the economy of our country.

*From the members of The Richings Players, Iver, Buckinghamshire*

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