

THE GIRL NEXT DOOR *OR* G&S with a twist !

by Eve Rapley

Abbots Langley Gilbert & Sullivan Society (ALGSS) are used to filling column inches in the local and regional press. Their reputation as being *the* best G&S society in the area has long been confirmed by their press plaudits, record ticket sales and their loyal following, as well as by the number of awards and commendations bestowed upon them at the International G&S Festival and by NODA itself. Indeed, ALGSS won the inaugural Dorothy Lawson award for the best G&S show throughout the entire NODA London area in 2007 for its acclaimed production of "The Gondoliers". So, with their impeccable G&S pedigree and hot on the heels of their latest triumph with "Ruddigore" (which they'll be reprising in August at the Buxton Opera House as part of the International G&S Festival), their forthcoming summer show will undoubtedly be one of the G&S canon. Yes? No. Well, maybe. *Maybe* because whilst their next production was certainly not penned by Messers Gilbert & Sullivan themselves, it unquestionably has more than a whiff of G&S about it. Cue; "The Girl Next Door".

An unashamedly cheeky parody of Gilbert & Sullivan with the story revolving around the village of Abbots-in-the-Langley and its local thespians presenting "Impatience" (or the Spaceman's Bride), a supposedly "lost" G&S opera, its deliciously whimsical musical score and genuinely funny script will ensure that the audience (whether they be from Abbots Langley or not!) will be entertained.

Whilst it's always an exciting challenge for a company to stage new or unknown works, "The Girl Next Door" will be close to the hearts of those performing it and the villagers who will see it because of its very special local connection.

Written in 1956 by Cambridge undergraduates Peter Vincent, John Pardoe and Abbots Langley's very own church organist and choirmaster Alan Vening, "The Girl Next Door" proved to be a creative and career launch pad for Messers Pardoe, Vincent &

Vening. Whilst John Pardoe enjoyed a successful and high profile career in politics, it was Peter Vincent and Alan Vening who found prosperity in the arts; Vincent as a prolific and influential writer for Dave Allen and the Two Ronnies and Vening as Director of Music of the Cambridge Footlights, a composer and as Director of Music at Aldenham School. Unseen since being performed in Cambridge back in the 50s, "The Girl Next Door" will be staged in the Henderson Hall (2-5th July) to provide a glittering finale to the renowned Abbots Langley Festival of the Arts (ALFA). Held every two years, ALFA features the very best of theatre, music and art that Abbots Langley has to offer.

So, having been set in Abbots Langley with the music having been written by an Abbots Langley local, "The Girl Next Door" will be not only be staged in Abbots Langley but it will also be directed by Andrew Taylor and musically directed by Brenda Southern who are perhaps, unsurprisingly from Abbots Langley. Like Alan and his co-writers, Andrew has a wealth of theatrical knowledge as well as a massive reputation locally as a performer and increasingly as a director. His production of "The Sorcerer" with ALGSS won the NODA London Kathleen Oyler award and his latest show, "The Mikado" (with PHEOS), won the best G&S in their NODA area in 2007.

Brenda's knowledge of G&S is encyclopaedic having directed and performed to great acclaim over many years, including gaining an award nomination for her performance in "Yeomen of the Guard" at the 2005 International G&S Festival. Since their many years working together with the successful charity cabaret group, "4's Company", Alan is itching to work with both Brenda and Andrew again and feels that their unique portfolio of talents and local knowledge is just what "The Girl Next Door" needs to bring her to life again.

To see "The Girl Next Door" go to www.algss.org.uk or email publicity@algss.org.uk for ticket information.



Alan Vening
co-writer



Brenda Southern
Musical Director



Andrew Taylor
Director