

# ALGSS The Girl Next Door

by Alan Vening, Peter Vincent and John Pardoe

The name of the village gives it away, Abbots-in-the-Langley. There had to be a connection and this musical was written in 1956 by Alan Vening, local resident. Originally it was performed at the Cambridge Corn Exchange. Alan Vening played the piano for us and our conductor was the musical director Brenda Southorn, visible to the audience in silhouette.

Stage left - Terrie's house (Gareth Edwards), stage right - Sal's house (Katherine Litter), each was coy, love concealed. The village was depicted with church and village green, the morning scene brightened the stage, the chorus singing cheerfully, the postman's cue directly from the cock-crow and the milkman's horse - wilful. The paper boy joined in singing Sleepy Town.

Abbots in the Langley was celebrating its arts festival. Am-dram was going to perform 'Impatience or the Spaceman's Bride by W S Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan'. The ladies were learning the Can-Can but 'pas de 'je ne sais quoi'. The so French Madame Eurydice (Sarah Downing) showed frustration brandishing her long cigarette holder. Councillor Sinclair Ffagg (Graham Jackson) comes to the rescue so unexpectedly 'you must have éclat' and smiles spread as he prances around the stage. Terry plays the piano, Sal stands over it, fleetingly eyes meet, coyness and Sal moves away and sings, He Loves Me-Or does he, why can't he let it show? The theme of love that is not shown recurs in the saddy amusing scene with Sinclair Ffagg and his frumpy secretary

Miss Jayne Bodkyne (Emma Southorn). Graham Jackson astounds the audience with his management of three telephones on his desk - a feat of dexterity.

Barrington Frunge (Russell Stratton) flamboyant, romantic pop idol returns to his home village to star in the opera and all the girls swoon in their swirling skirts, shirt-waisters or sundresses - he does fancy Sal who will be his leading lady and unsettles Jayne Bodkyne with his suggestions about her attire, the result transforms her life. Throughout straight-laced Aunt Amy (Jan Taylor) who is the Mayor guards decorum in her cats-eye spectacles wide skirted dress and hand-bag.

This is the first time I have received a programme within a programme. The second is for the opera within the musical. Barrington Frunge, audaciously dressed as space pilot was leaving to cruise the solar system. The music was all G&S and the allusions in the plot conjured up the librettos. It was hilarious and the audience needed more of this. Unfortunately it had to end. A newspaper reporter announced that the opera was a fake, not G&S at all but a spoof by Sinclair Ffagg. Jane bursts into tears and Ffagg notices her at last. Terry notices Sal and all ends happily.

Vening's musical is a marvellous and original idea for a plot skilfully written and delightfully played and sung by actors who are akin to the theme, the location and the characters.

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# More Success for ALGSS!

As ALGSS prepare to dust off their acclaimed January production of "Ruddigore" to present for 'one night only' at the International G&S Festival, they can do so with an even bigger spring in their step following news of their latest NODA (National Operatic and Dramatic Association) success. After playing to appreciative audiences and with a plethora of plaudits at the Watford Palace Theatre, they were nominated for the Kathleen Oyler award for Best Chorus at the recent AGM held at the Wyllits Theatre in Potters Bar. With around 240 societies in the NODA London area, competition for awards and nominations is stiff. Following their success in the G&S award category last year with "The Gondoliers", ALGSS were thrilled to be up there with the cream of the crop again with their Linda Dyne directed show. ALGSS Chairman, Stephen Lavender commented that, "gaining recognition from NODA is a real shot in the arm for us, especially as we start rehearsing for our Buxton trip this month and have high hopes of gaining positive feedback from both the audience and the adjudicator. We don't go to win; we go to enjoy the experience of the opera house, to have a good time and do a good show. Of course, if we do win anything that's the icing on the cake!".

After a well earned rest in August, ALGSS will be hitting the rehearsal floor again on 8th September to prepare for the



ALGSS Chair, Stephen Lavender and Vice Chair Annie Rycroft

perennial G&S favourite; "The Mikado". Directed by award winning producer, Julia Rufeby, the show will be treated to an update as it will be set in 21st century Japan. To be involved contact

membership@algss.org.uk or visit [www.algss.org.uk](http://www.algss.org.uk) for more info. The show will be 19-23 January at the Watford Palace Theatre.

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