

Saffron Walden Musical Theatre Company:

After an enforced break of 18 months, SWMTC spent the early part of 2021 planning our return to live theatre.

Our Youth Group was thrilled to be able to bring *The Wind in the Willows* to Saffron Walden Town Hall in November 2021. It was a monumental effort by all involved as we were battling against the Covid pandemic and all the subsequent restrictions. We were due to hold audition workshops in June 2021, but government restrictions were extended meaning groups were not permitted inside. Therefore we auditioned 40+ children two by two, safely distanced in a covid secure environment.

Rehearsals started in earnest in September and carried on twice weekly through until the show week in November. We had a few children isolating, including one of our lead actors just days before the dress rehearsal. However, thankfully everyone was fit at well just at the right time. The children performed five shows to sell out audiences over four days. The feedback from everyone was fabulous and we were delighted to receive nominations from our governing body, NODA (National Operatic and Dramatic Association), for Best Youth Production and Best Technical Production. In addition, one of our cast, Corbin Abbassi has been awarded Best Youth Performer. We will find out about the two nominations at the Award Ceremony in April.

The adult group were very fortunate to be granted rights to perform *Kinky Boots* in March 2022, being the first group to put on this show in our local area. We ran a teaser afternoon at the Town Hall in July 2021 to encourage people to get involved. Auditions were held in September and we were delighted to welcome many new members to the company, several of whom live further afield in Cambridge, Sawston, Harlow, Braintree and Bishop's Stortford.

Rehearsals ran from September through to March with windows open and masks worn, at times, to try and reduce Covid infections. Those who did test positive could watch the rehearsals via Zoom if they were well enough. At one of our Sunday rehearsals in January we were really excited to be joined by Jed Berry, who played one of the Angels in the West End production of *Kinky Boots*. He put us through our paces, added some extra sparkle to a couple of our big numbers and gave our 3 Angels some top tips and extra sass!

Tickets went on sale in January 2022 and we sold out in record time with reserve lists of people wanting tickets.

We have literally just finished "Show Week" and the production has received rave reviews – it is hugely gratifying when all our hard work is appreciated by audiences and we get such lovely comments about the performances, choreography, set and band etc..... a few people couldn't quite believe that our Angels were really men!

2022 marks our centenary year and we were delighted that the President of NODA came to watch the opening night of *Kinky Boots* and afterwards presented us with a Centenary Certificate.

The next event in our centenary year is a special celebration concert at Saffron Hall on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June – tickets on sale now. Later in the year our Youth Group will be bringing Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat to Saffron Walden Town Hall. We have our production team in place and will hold auditions in July. Watch this space.

SWMTC is run by volunteers and we really appreciate every single one of them – without them, it would not be possible to put on our shows. In addition, we are very grateful for the funding received from Saffron Walden Town Council and other local institutions. Every source of additional revenue helps us to continue to bring high quality musical theatre to Saffron Walden - hopefully for the next 100 years!