

## **Harpenden Light Operatic Society Celebrates 60 Glorious Years**

On Saturday 26 June some 200 Society Members, families and friends gathered at the Public Halls in Harpenden to commemorate HLOS' Diamond Jubilee. The main thrust of the evening's celebration was a spectacular Revue – entertainment provided in a varied programme of solo and ensemble performances, choral singing, dance routines, extracts from Stage Shows and comedy sketches – all performed by Members; set and rehearsed by our talented team of resident Directors and Musical Directors; and accompanied by our faithful rehearsal pianists.

The usual theatre style of Harpenden Halls had been transformed into a cleverly arranged dining room, where everyone had a table seat and a bird's eye view of the stage, which was fully dressed, lit and amplified to the standard normally reserved for our twice yearly show productions. The compere for the evening, the Society's President George Edkins, guided the audience with an explanation of all of the musical numbers and sketches; and there were Welcome Addresses at the beginning of each Act from two of the Society's longest serving Life Vice-Presidents – Linda Dyne and Gloria Barratt.

In an evening of excellent performances there were several high spots. Mandy Gaines had written, devised and directed unique Opening and Closing numbers; Avril Roberts our most senior performing member (and Life Vice-President too) entertained the company with one of her most popular and comic music hall songs; we were treated to highly entertaining and well polished extracts and routines from some of the West End's most popular Shows including – Sweet Charity, Me and My Girl, Guys and Dolls and Hairspray (all fully and authentically costumed). Our longest serving Musical Director, Roy Mathers, had put together a medley of favourite Gilbert and Sullivan choruses, which was performed to great acclaim by an HLOS Choir of 25 voices. All of the acts were of first rate standard and, sadly, too numerous to mention here individually.

To further mark the importance of this Diamond Anniversary event and the emphasis which the Society places on loyal service, our two most senior ladies, Cynthia Southern and Avril Roberts were presented with N.O.D.A. 60 year badges. Our stalwart costumes lady, Chris Cardy, had further displayed her many talents by baking a special birthday cake. This had its candles blown out and then was cut jointly by our most senior and most junior members, Cynthia Southern and Georgina Eagles respectively. The cake was in due course devoured at the end of the superb supper which had been prepared by Susanne Woods and her daughters and family friends.

In the foyer of the Halls was a display of photographs representing shows from the Society's 60 year history and these, plus the numbers of returning members present for that evening, gave many people the opportunity to get reacquainted with former fellow performers and to reminisce over the 100+ shows which HLOS has presented since its original production of *The Pirates of Penzance* in 1951.

Tom Quinn the current Chairman of HLOS' Committee had the highly agreeable task of proposing a general vote of thanks to the veritable army of HLOS supporters who had contributed to the enormous success of the Diamond Jubilee Celebration. Singling out individuals for specific mention would have been an impossible task but the event's organisers were called on stage for the presentation of token gifts on behalf of a very grateful Society. Joyce Smith, Gill Pigram and Brian Woods were thanked for their considerable efforts and special thanks was reserved for Mary Watkinson who had led that small team and had been the inspiration and driving force for the event overall; and the facilitator for the many participants who had combined to create such a memorable occasion. She had even found the time to appear in a number of the acts herself!

No-one could have left the venue with anything other than happy thoughts of a splendid evening and tremendous pride in the talent which exists within HLOS – not only for entertaining – but also for the ability to organise an event of such quality; and to present and stage manage it to such a professional standard. In the words of that great Irving Berlin song "There's No Business like Show Business!" There's certainly no people like HLOS people!