

## EVE BAKER

It was almost exactly 30 years ago that the Baker family first became involved in Chelmsford theatrical life when Diana joined Chelmsford Young Generation Musical Society hereinafter known by the acronym C.Y.G.A.M.S. However her first show was, I believe, as a sweet young thing - it says here! In - I seem to remember - The Sound of Music for Chelmsford Amateur operatic and Dramatic Society (CAODS).

Although Diana continued to perform with both societies it wasn't until 2000 that Eve plucked up courage to audition for My Fair Lady And then - and I quote - "much to Diana's annoyance" - was invited to join the cast of Oklahoma in 2001 when CAODS had that extremely rare disease of - not enough women in a show!!

So what happened to Eve and Geoff in the interim? Did they sit at home and wait to hear how much their daughter had enjoyed rehearsals? No, far from it.

Since the first day that they arrived they have probably spent more time working for both societies and their productions than almost anyone else including the members who were rehearsing to go on stage. Geoff's main function was to be the main man converting, building, re-building and re-re-building our brilliant HQ to the wonderful building it now is - the object of jealousy of most other visiting societies I'm sure.

Eve, however has been a backroom mainstay of both societies shows, and CYGAMS Summer Schools right up to as recently as Copacabana.

It's nice to have the opportunity to let people know what goes on behind the scenes of a musical at the Civic or indeed any other amateur or professional theatre production.

The audience see all the glitz and glamour on stage but how does it happen? How do we get there? How do we -or the ladies in particular - leave the stage so elegantly only to return only a couple of minutes later in a totally different costume all cool and elegant?

That's the excitement backstage. The sheer panic that goes on as you try to change a complete costume in 2 minutes - or as our dear director tells us in 90 seconds like all my other societies!! We know that's all lies but we manage all the same.

We rehearse for 5 months in our own casual clothes and then just as we are really relaxing and beginning to enjoy rehearsals - the costumes arrive and it all falls apart. Which bit goes where - how do I tie this - which shirt with which suit - all so obvious in normal times but not in 90 seconds.

Why am I telling you this? - well, this is where Eve and other dressers come into their own. We couldn't go on without them. We rush off stage - stand there like a tailors dummy and do nothing while clothes are torn off us and the new ones thrown on and all tied and done up - while we start running back to

the stage entrance in time to stroll on stage looking – hopefully – cool and elegant.

But Eve has always been involved throughout the whole rehearsal process. Sometimes for CYGAMS with the added headache of choosing and hiring all the costumes, measuring the whole cast and then when the costumes arrive trying to make them fit! She then carries on making running repairs throughout show week. She has also been in charge of finding or hiring all the show props, sometimes chaperoning the younger members and I'm told that she was always the last to leave the dressing rooms at the end of show week – leaving it all clean & tidy while we all rush to the bar – only the adults of course – but she then helps the get out from the theatre and has often even helped unload the lorry at the HQ.

Obviously her health has forced her to step back a little of late but Jan Toland of CYGAMS pointed out to me that Eve has taught her everything about running a show's costume wardrobe and couldn't have done it without Eve's help which she will now sorely miss.

I hope that wasn't too long winded for you but it's vitally important to describe the incredible contribution Eve has made to so many of our shows. Never needing to be asked to volunteer – just there automatically to help. After nearly 40 years at CAODS I was quite unaware of just how much Eve has given us over the years.

That's what's so good about the Baker family. They all know how to contribute 100% to any venture they undertake. Where would we be without people like them?

There are of course a few lighter aspects of Eve's character which we often see during show week. Her dancing around the dressing room during a particularly dancey show such as Anything Goes – thinking no one could see her - but someone has now told me all about it! Another entertaining moment in many shows was passing through the green room or anywhere appropriate and witnessing Eve helping Diana with a quick change or plaiting her hair. Not an experience for the faint hearted. That's a thought. Who will take over that responsibility? Phew! Have to be a lady of course?

Off stage Eve has always taken a full part in the social life of both societies and only recently in October was at CAODS quiz night. She saw Titanic and enjoyed it but sadly missed Les Mis last week. How she would have enjoyed seeing young Emily in that wonderful show. But fortunately she did manage to see Geoff receive his life membership award.

She will be so missed, but with much affection and happy memories by so many of us that she has worked with in these two societies over so many years. Let's hope we manage to fill those voids which she has left.