

## SOL summer school a success

SOL, the intensive two-week theatre school held at Daneside Theatre, Congleton, culminated recently with two performances of *Samarkand*, *the Girl with the World in Her Eyes*, which were enjoyed by audiences, including a range of local dignitaries.

The show focused on developing acting, singing and dancing skills and also helped the participants to develop confidence.

At the same time SOL ensured that all the participants enjoyed themselves and gained life experience. Talking about the performance, director Wain Simon and choreographer Louise Carter said: "It's great that SOL has again been such a success, thanks to the hard work and determination of all our volunteers and the young people themselves."

Town Mayor Coun George Hayes added: "I am pleased to see SOL move from strength to strength each year, offering the opportunity to develop key skills which will undoubtedly help in the future lives of so many young people."

"I am pleased that the town council, among other sponsors,



From left, Mr Wain, Coun Hayes and Ms Carter.

has been able to support this group and I very much look forward to continuing to watch the good work of the SOL Theatre School movement."

Next year's theatre school runs from 4th to 16th August. For further details, contact Louise Carter on 01260 290050.

(Submitted photograph).

## Tudor day with Welsh National Opera

Little Moreton Hall hosts singers from Welsh National Opera on Thursday, 24th October.

As part of its performances of *Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda* and *Roberto Devereux* by Donizetti at Liverpool's Empire Theatre this autumn, the opera is bringing the world of courtly intrigue and rival Tudor queens to audiences at Little Moreton, as well as to Speke Hall.

A coach will take visitors to both venues with an expert speaker giving a talk that will put both properties and Donizetti's operas into context.

Opera singers will perform extracts from the operas.

*Anna Bolena* (Anne Boleyn) is an opera in two acts, one of a number of operas by Donizetti dealing with the Tudor period in English history.

*Maria Stuarda* (named for Mary, Queen of Scots) appeared in different forms in 1834 and 1835. Finally, in 1837, came *Roberto Devereux* (an alleged lover of Queen Elizabeth I). The leading female characters of the operas *Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda*, and *Roberto Devereux* are often referred to as the "three Donizetti queens".

The duet *Sul Suo Capo Aggravi Un Dio* between Anna and Jane Seymour is considered one of the finest in the operatic repertoire.

Tickets (£25) include talks, coach travel entry to the properties and lunch. Tickets for National Trust members are limited — call the opera's marketing team on 029 2063 5030.

The opera performs *The Tudors* at Liverpool's Empire Theatre from 23rd to 25th October.

For details and tickets, call 0844 871 3017 or visit [atgtickets.com/Liverpool](http://atgtickets.com/Liverpool)

## Goo Goo Dolls in UK



Goo Goo Dolls return to the UK next month.

In their first visit since 2010, the band has just announced a string of dates kicking off in Nottingham on Tuesday, 15th October.

The Dolls released their 10th album *Magnetic* on 10th June.

Other dates include Wednesday, 16th October at Manchester Academy and the 23rd at Birmingham Institute.

(Submitted photograph).

## An assortment of Ayckbourn at Vic

Classic comedy *Time of My Life* arrives at the New Vic this autumn when Alan Ayckbourn makes his annual visit to the theatre-in-the-round.

First produced at Scarborough's Stephen Joseph Theatre in 1992 and then in the West End, *Time of My Life* is one of Ayckbourn's most popular plays and is at the New Vic from Tuesday, 8th to Saturday, 26th October.

It is Laura Stratton's birthday and to celebrate the event her husband Gerry, their two sons and their partners are gathered for an evening out in the family's favourite restaurant. The dinner turns out to be a significant moment in all their lives with repercussions for years to come.

Ayckbourn said: "This is one of my very JB Priestley-esque plays. It deals with time and is very much about living for the moment: how we sometimes fail to realise where we are in our lives — if only we had stopped and just looked around for a moment."

The cast comprises John Branwell, Rachel Caffrey, Sarah Parks, Emily Pithon, Ben Porter, James Powell and Richard Stacey.

The same company will appear in Ayckbourn's latest play, *Arrivals and Departures*, which is at the New Vic from Thursday, 10th to Saturday, 26th October, and *Farcicals*, two short, one-act linked pieces, *The Kidderminster Affair* on Friday, 11th and Saturday, 19th October, and *Chloë With Love* on Saturday, 12th and Saturday, 19th October.

Tickets for *Time of My Life*, (£12 to £21) from the New Vic box office on 01782 717962 or online at [newvictheatre.org.uk](http://newvictheatre.org.uk)

## Acoustic Alchemy



An array of talent from Cheshire and Stoke-on-Trent converged on The Vine pub in Shavington for Acoustic Alchemy II on Saturday.

The free acoustic gig comprised soloists and groups with performances from local performer Dayve Dean as well as Sam Lyon, The John Macleod band, Jon Tarplee and United Breaks. United Breaks headlined the evening with Neil Smith on guitar/lead vocals, Nick Bayes on bass guitar, Tim Kirwin on saxophone, and Tom Seals on keyboard.

(Submitted photograph).

## Johnny Cash fans can relive his show

*The Johnny Cash Roadshow* walks the line to Hanley's Victoria Hall on Thursday, 10th October.

Prepare for a musical adventure unrivalled by any other that truly celebrates the career of a music legend, Johnny Cash.

Fronted by respected singer/songwriter Clive John, with The Spirit Band, the show re-creates the essence of what it was like to be at a real Cash show. It features Jill Schoonjans as June Carter and two more talented ladies as the Carter Sisters.

Tickets from Congleton TIC.

## Synth king Thomas Dolby on UK tour



Thomas Dolby, musician, record producer and award-winning independent filmmaker is on a September and October UK tour.

The British synth player had chart success in the 1980s with hits like *Windpower*, *Hyperactive!* and *She Blinded Me With Science* and the Invisible Lighthouse Tour sees Dolby take his latest film project on the road, and present it to audiences as a theatrical experience.

There is a mysterious island across the water off the East Anglian coast that, during its chequered history, has been an airfield, a military testing ground for experimental weapons and home to the main transmission network for the BBC World Service.

On the tip of the island is a beautiful lighthouse. But, now, it is about to be closed down. Like many lighthouses around the world, it's becoming obsolete as ships adopt satellite navigation. With global warming and beach erosion threatening its very foundations, it's soon going to be a pile of rubble left to fall into the North Sea.

Over the past year, Dolby has taught himself to become a writer, filmmaker and editor in order to produce an impressionistic documentary that follows in the vein of his music and lyrics, describing it as "a kind of tone poem with music and moving images".

Local dates include tomorrow (Friday) at the Waterside Arts Centre, Manchester.

(Submitted photograph).

## 50 Days of Grey

*50 Days of Grey* is a "heart-warming, outrageous" comedy that tells the story of San (Sue Hodge — *Allo Allo*) and Fran (Julie Fox — *The Rocky Horror Show*) who are best friends and live a fairly ordinary life in the sleepy backwater of Batley, Yorkshire, where life is full of societies, WIs and committees.

It's 2012 and there are Olympic events and celebrations to organise but it's raining. Every day is grey, and when it rains, everyone needs to find something to do indoors: especially when a new "saucy" book is being read by one of San's friends.

San needs to save her marriage, Fran needs to find a man and Len, San's husband, has his own naughty little secrets.

The performance is at Crewe Lyceum Theatre tomorrow (Friday) and Saturday and tickets are available (from £18) at the theatre box office on 01270 368242 or online at [crewe.lyceum.co.uk](http://crewe.lyceum.co.uk)

## Gym and coffee

Gymophobics ladies' gym, in Capitol Walk, Congleton, is holding a Macmillan coffee morning and gym open day tomorrow (Friday) 9am-5pm.

There will be a raffle, prizes and cakes.

## Michaelmas Mop Fair at Little Moreton



You can't get the staff . . . master of the house John Deakin and maid Liz Greenwood get ready for the mop fair.

Visitors to Little Moreton Hall will be offered apprenticeships in trades such as scribe (writing with a quill pen), apothecary (mixing potions), chandler (making beeswax candles) and seamstress (sewing and embroidering) at the weekend.

The occasion is a traditional Michaelmas Mop Fair, staged at the hall on Saturday and Sunday.

Daphne Mayer, National Trust visitor experience officer at the hall, said: "In Medieval and Tudor times the mop fairs were events where labourers, servants and tradesmen were hired. They were held at Michaelmas because that was the start and end of the farming year."

"For the workers, the fairs were serious business. If you failed to find employment for the next 12 months, starvation was a real

threat."

Visitors will be shown what to do and once they have got the hang of the skills, they are given a mop badge to show what trade they are apprenticed to. Then master of the house William Moreton (John Deakin), will attach a ribbon to the mop badge, to show they have been hired.

Members of The Tudor and Stuarts Living History Society will be on hand to provide more information. Musicians from the society will also add a bit of merriment.

Ms Mayer added: "At Little Moreton Hall we try to give visitors a real idea of what everyday life was like in the 16th century, when the hall was being built. The Mop Fair is an element of that. Last year it was very popular with visitors, especially the younger ones. Some of them managed to be hired for about half a dozen different trades."

Little Moreton Hall's mop fair runs on Saturday and Sunday (Michaelmas Day) between 11am and 5pm.

(Photo: National Trust).

## Singers' 28th season starts

Rehearsals for the first concert of Holmes Chapel Singers' 28th season are now underway.

The concert takes place on Saturday, 30th November and will feature *St Nicholas* by Benjamin Britten (in celebration of the centenary of his birth); *When Icicles Hang* by John Rutter, and *On Christmas Night* by Bob Chilcott. *St Nicholas* uses three boy trebles and a tenor as soloists.

The special aspect of this season is the choir's 100th concert on Saturday, 1st March. This will take the form of a singing day where singers are invited to join with the choir, for the day, to prepare and perform *Messiah* by Handel.

All proceeds from the event will go to St Luke's Hospice.

On Saturday, 29th March, the choir sings Mozart's *Mass in C Minor* together with his *Vespers* (Vesperae KV 339).

The season finishes in exuberant style with the operetta *Pink Champagne* by Johann Strauss.

All concerts will include soloists and orchestra and will be conducted by musical director, Philip Crookall.

They take place in Holmes Chapel Leisure Centre and start at 7.30pm. For tickets (£10, students £5, under-16s £2) call ticket secretary David Routs on 01477 534928 or email [routs.dc@supanet.com](mailto:routs.dc@supanet.com) They are also available from Chethams, London Road, Holmes Chapel, choir members and at the door.

## Colliery the star of new music video

A music album with a video shot at the old Chatterley Whitfield Colliery was released this week.

The album *Be Yourself At Whitfield* is available to download from Saturday from iTunes or Spotify, or as a CD from [eclipse-sound-studios.com](http://eclipse-sound-studios.com) It also includes a video (available on YouTube) of the first track *I Am Not A Stone*, shot at Chatterley Whitfield and surrounding countryside.

The album is the brainchild of Dutch music producer John Hellenbrand, who began writing it in the late 1990s but held back releasing it while he sought a singer who had the right voice and emotional connection with the lyrics. Finally he encountered backing singer Belinda Hemelaar in 2012 and recording began in September 2012. He provided the instrumental recordings and all the production in his own studio.

As his father worked at the last working coal mine in the Netherlands, Mr Hellenbrand wanted to shoot a video at a colliery and was able to get permission to film at Chatterley Whitfield from Stoke-on-Trent City Council, with assistance from Councillors Sybil Ralphs, of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and Matthew Tolley, of Biddulph Town Council, and the Friends of Chatterley Whitfield.