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Sixty glorious years for society founder members

NODA West Midlands

In November 2019, Redditch Operatic Society (ROS) celebrated their sixtieth anniversary year, with an exhilarating production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *CATS*.

A diamond anniversary is to be celebrated, of course. But it was not, in itself, an especially unusual event given the equally long history of many dramatic and operatic groups across the country.

However, what really made this particular occasion exceptional was the participation on stage of two of the Society's founding members – husband and wife team, Bob and Pearl Taylor – who were there at the re-formation of the Society in 1959, and for the Society's first production of *The Quaker Girl*, and who have performed with the Society ever since.

Bob and Pearl recall: "We were members of the Redditch Youth Club Choir, and our Choir Mistress Bessie Hill, told us that a meeting had been convened to reform the Redditch Operatic Society which had been disbanded at the start of the war. A few of us were invited to go along and join, so we went along to the first rehearsal and were hooked! We were happy to help re-form the Society, never thinking that we would still be here sixty years later the early years, we were content to be chorus members, but then we became a bit more ambitious, dancing and playing increasingly bigger parts over the years, especially for Pearl, who played some leading roles in various productions."

As the years went on, they became more involved with the running of the society. On the committee, Pearl was Social Secretary, and then Treasurer for many years. And Bob was a general committee member until invited to become President of the Society in 2014. Pearl has also produced a number of shows for the Society.



The Count of Luxembourg - 1968



Husbands and Wives in 25 Years of ROS - 1983

"Due to our activities, they also became involved with the Palace Theatre in Redditch; Pearl as a key holder and bar/front of house volunteer, and Bob as a member of the volunteer stage crew. When the theatre was in threat of closure and demolition, we would like to think that members of ROS helped save the theatre and kept it going, making it the success it is today. The Palace Theatre is, of course, where we have performed our shows over the past four decades and more."

"As you can imagine, the last sixty years with Redditch Operatic Society has been, and still is, a big part of our lives; a life during which we have met a lot of clever and talented people who we now know as our friends". Bob says, "A good operatic society is like a happy family, and I like to think we are both (good and happy)". Pearl added, "As Bob says, it is a happy, wonderful family. So much so, that two of our younger members, Kelly and Paul, have 'adopted' us as 'grandparents' – what a joy and pleasure



CATS - 2019

beyond words. We have seen so many talented people come and go over the years and, whilst we will still be involved behind-the-scenes, we now think we should leave the stage to our talented younger generation to carry on and take the Society through many more years ahead".

ROS Chairman, Tony Jay, summarised by saying, "Bob and Pearl are true 'legends' of Redditch Operatic Society. A couple whose love of singing and performing has shone over sixty years. Their commitment to the Society, both on and off stage is an example to us all. We have been very lucky indeed to have had their dedication, hard work and wise words over the years, not to mention the joy they have brought to our audiences when on stage. There surely cannot be many societies who have had members perform with them continually for sixty years, from the very first show to our latest. To us, they are unique!"