

Tickets selling fast for play with local connections

Wild Oats down at the abbey

By Jackie McCarrick

IT'S time to dust off the picnic chairs and fill the hamper for this year's open-air drama by the Maskers Theatre Company, in the grounds of Mottisfont Abbey from July 15 to 25.

This year's play choice is *Wild Oats* by 18th century writer John O'Keefe, described by William Hazlitt as "an English Moliere". In the later part of his life, O'Keefe lived in a cottage at 51 Bedford Place in Southampton and was buried at All Saints Church in Back of the Walls.

Although this play was written before O'Keefe came to live in Hampshire, it contains many local references that suggest its setting was in and around Stockbridge and that its coach inn scene was probably set at the Grosvenor Hotel.

Wild Oats was only re-discovered by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1976, when it was performed to great critical acclaim with a cast that included Jeremy Irons, Zoe Wannamaker and Ben Cross.

Tickets are selling well for the Maskers production. The July 18 performance is already sold out. For other nights, phone the Turner Sims box office, 01703 595151.



WILD OATS: Carl Dunnington as Muz and Alec Walters as Harry Thunder.

Singers for Titipu?

LOCAL amateur singers will have a rare chance to perform with professionals from the world-famous D'Oyly Carte Opera this weekend. Members of the D'Oyly Carte arrive in Eastleigh on Friday for a weekend of practical workshops on Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*, and up to 50 amateur singers will get the chance to rehearse and perform with them. But you don't have to perform to get to see the show — there is a free performance at 4.30pm on Sunday at The Point dance and arts centre. There's also a supper quiz on the Saturday evening when Bill Clancy from D'Oyly Carte will give a talk on the 122-year history of the opera company and their collaboration with Gilbert and Sullivan. This will be followed by a quiz and a two-course meal with wine for £10.50. This is the first in a programme of workshop events and performances at The Point based around opera and musical theatre. In September there will be a chance to work with stars from the West End stage on a tribute to George Gershwin and November sees the return of Richard Gregson and Nina Walker from the Royal Opera House. For more information contact the Arts Unit at Eastleigh Borough Council on 01703 622187.

All aboard for show

YOUNG performers from the junior section of Southampton Operatic Society are gearing up for a four night run of their latest production, the Gilbert and Sullivan favourite *HMS Pinafore*. The production — featuring 16-year-olds David Monaghan and David Tatnall as principals Ralph Rackstraw and Captain Corcoran, 14-year-old Stephen Mulley as Sir Joseph Porter and 13-year-olds Kate Roscoe and Rebecca Weatherall as Little Buttercup and Josephine — runs from July 15-18 at The Avenue Hall in Southampton. Producer is Wendy South and musical director Anne Turner. The junior section of the operatic society is a thriving group of around 45 youngsters but there is always room for new members. Budding singers, aged 8-16, who are interested in joining should contact the secretary Terry O'Farrell on 01703 340568.