



Society : Crowthorne Musical Players
Production : **HELLO, DOLLY!**
Date : 24th May 2012
Venue : Wilde Theatre, South Hill Park, Bracknell
Report by : Gordon Bird, NODA Representative, District 14

Report

I have not seen this show before. Of course I have heard the title song many times and sung by many different artists over the years. So I was very pleased to be invited to see the Jerry Herman musical based on the English play "A day well spent", by John Oxenford.

The production presented by CMP on a warm Thursday evening in late May was pleasantly presented by a talented team of singers and performers.

The dancing, in particular by the waiters in the restaurant, was exceptionally well presented by some gifted individuals and imaginative choreographer.

Overall I enjoyed this production of *Hello, Dolly!* and went home with that well known tune in my head.

SUE PRIOR (Mrs Dolly Gallagher Levi)

This was an outstanding performance by Sue as the match making Dolly Levi. Her singing was equally impressive, excellent in fact, and her characterisation was first rate. Her accent, like many in this production, was superbly maintained. This was a wonderful performance from the beginning to the end.

CHRIS WOOD (Ambrose Kemper)

This was a very good performance by Chris as Ambrose, the young artist, who wants to marry Horace's niece, Ermengarde. His delivery was very good and I heard every word clearly at the back of the auditorium.

JOHN CALLEY (Horace Vandergelder)

John has a lovely, strong and confident singing voice which he used to excellent advantage in his performance of Horace. He established a believable characterisation of Horace early and continued with good effect throughout the production. The accent did waver a little – was not sure if it was American or Dutch or a mixture of the two. However, this did not deter from a very strong performance.

SAMANTHA HOLDING (Ermengarde)

What a lovely character! All one has to do is come on stage and cry! And Samantha performed this role admirably – crying on cue to good effect! She established her character from her first entrance and maintained it throughout.

DAVID BENNETT (Cornelius Hackl)

I enjoyed David's performance of Cornelius Hackle. He had a clear and good understanding of the character and his accent was well maintained throughout the evening. He sung all his songs very well indeed. Well done!

DAMIAN THOMAS (Barnaby Tucker)

I have seen Damian in a few productions over this last year and he just gets better and better. This performance is probably his best yet – as he acted superbly throughout, offering an excellent characterisation of Barnaby, the seventeen "simpleton". I thought in his last role he was too young for the part, and would it be too mean to suggest that in this part I felt that he was too old? It was a shame there is a comment about the age because I do not think it is relevant to the performance. Damian's accent was once again very well sustained throughout the show. Damian produced some good comic performances. I particularly liked his facial expressions, especially when he unexpectedly ended up dancing with the waiters in a can can dance!

CAROLINE KENNEDY (Minnie Fay)

I been fortunate to see Caroline in a number of different shows of the last few years and she always delivers a polished performance and I am pleased to report that this was no exception. Caroline superbly delivered that long monologue, deliberately rushed but still very much audible, quite a skill – especially when you add an American accent into the mix. Her characterisation, as always, was well understood and portrayed. Caroline is also a very competent singer and sung with superb composure and assurance all evening.

DEBBIE MANN (Irene Molloy)

I note from the programme that this was Debbie's first principal part. Although she understandably started a little rushed, she soon relaxed in giving an wonderfully assured performance. Her accent was very well maintained throughout and she managed to keep her diction clear (alas, which is not always the case). Debbie produced a lovely singing voice, singing very confidently in all her numbers. I particularly liked that she had some lovely facial expressions. On this showing I am sure that we will be seeing Debbie in a lot more principal parts!

MELINDA BENNETT (Ernestina Money)

Melinda presented a nice characterisation of Ernestina Money. It is only a small part but Melinda made the most of it!

OTHER PARTS - SUSANNE LEE (Mrs Rose), SUE DYER (Court recorder), PETER WINN (Rudolph Reisenweber), LUCIE JAMES (Police Officer) & PETER GREEN (Judge)

I felt that everyone clearly had an idea of what their character was about and delivered a good understanding in their performance.

DANCERS/WAITERS (Becky Adams, Melinda Bennett, Becky Harrison, Catherine Hazell, Erin Hope Pharo, Candy Price & Amanda Whewell)

There were some lovely dance performances within this show and I was particularly impressed with the dance involving the parasols. It was extremely effective and very well presented by a very well rehearsed troupe. However, that was nothing compared to the excellent choreography in the restaurant scene which was sublime! The movement was perfection to my eyes, and the effect was mesmerising. I cannot begin to think of the number of hours that were spent on rehearsing such a polished end product. Well done!

CHORUS

Nice moment when the waiters block us from seeing Mrs Money revealing too much. Well done to the member of the chorus who noticed the dropped serviette and with keeping in character swooped up the offending prop and took it off stage.

Stage Management (ALAN SMITH, CHARLOTTE HOLLINGSHEAD)

The stage seemed very well managed by all concerned with swift scene changes and all cues well executed.

Set

Overall the set looked effective, revealing the shop (inside and out), the restaurant, and using a backcloth of buildings. There was an issue, unfortunately, with the back cloth that seemed to get caught when the chorus left the stage which meant the cloth was dishevelled until the next scene change. I was not convinced about the gap between the set and the edge of the wings. I noticed that the gap was reduced in the final act and this made the entrances and exits from that side better. The biggest issue was that cast could be seen before they came on stage, which was a shame. I loved the milliners shop, shown from the outside that then swung round to reveal the inside. The restaurant however was very impressive, with the steps sweeping up centre stage and lovely, sparkling backdrop.

Sound (TOM HORROX)

There were some sound issues with the mics either they were slipping off costumes which mean they gave a rather unfortunate sound effect or they were live in the wings. But overall the sound was very well balanced producing a pleasant sound mix for the audience.

Lighting (MICHAEL BRENKLEY, BECCY WIRE)

There were some imaginative changes for each of the songs and I liked the added touch of the lights on top of the two statues in the restaurant! The overall plot was well designed, the

execution was on cue and the effects were very good. I was not aware of any issues with shadows being cast.

Wardrobe and Costumes (JANET WINN)

There were some lovely period costumes, especially for the women, and I should imagine Janet was working very hard to source or make all the necessary costumes. I liked the effect of the costumes for the parade, with the red white and blue worn by the dancers.

Choreography (ERIN HOPE PHARO)

Erin can be congratulated in providing an interesting and entertaining variation of dances. As I mentioned earlier under the dancers, the choreography for the restaurant scene was exceptionally well executed. In all the dances the cast or dancers knew what they were doing and you certainly produced entertaining and different routines. Well done!

Musical Director (NICK AUSTIN)

I felt all the soloists performed very well indeed, and the balance between the orchestra and singers was very well judged.

Director (MARK CONOLLY)

Having never seen this show before and heard so much about it, I was not disappointed with a very well rehearsed, well cast and well performed production. All of the moves seem to fit to the scene and entrances and exits were on cue.

Programme

A 20 page A5 programme that had a colour cover with black and white insert. The programme contained a useful list of past productions, a synopsis, an interesting article about "Yonkers", very detailed cast biographies with an accompanying clear black and white photograph.

I thoroughly enjoyed this production of Hello Dolly by Crowthorne Musical Players and look forward to their next production.

Gordon Bird

NODA representative

London region, District 14