

Society : CROWTHORNE MUSICAL PLAYERS  
Production : **THE ADDAMS FAMILY**  
Date : Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2015 (Matinee)  
Venue : South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell  
Report by : Gordon Bird, NODA Representative, Area 14



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## Show Report

I was delighted to be invited to review *The Addams Family*, the new musical with book by Marshall Brickham and Rick Elice and music and lyrics by Andrew Lippa.

*The Addams Family* started life as cartoon characters in an American newspaper, The New Yorker, in 1930s. The characters soon featured in films and TV programmes but the musical is more recent – the first performance was off Broadway on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2010 and ran on Broadway for some 722 performances before closing in 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011.

CMP production was wonderfully interpreted that brought all the characters to life. The choreography was crisp, the direction tight, the acting and singing superbly applied from a very talented group. The inspirational set added to the production and the whole company can be very pleased with their efforts.

### GOMEZ (DAMIAN SOLLESSE)

Husband to Morticia and father to Wednesday and Pugsley, Gomez is the head of the household. Damian superbly portrayed the somewhat childish characteristics, the ghoulish humour and undying love for his wife. The chemistry between Gomez and Morticia was spot on. His Latin accent was consistent although sometimes a little too thickly applied that some of the diction was lost. This is the only slight criticism in what was a superb performance by Damian. His singing was as accurate as any I have heard, his characterization perfectly presented.

### MORTICIA (JENNY GREEN)

I have seen Jenny many times on stage and it a compliment to say that I did not recognize her to begin with and had to check the programme. Her characterization was spot on, presenting the family matriarch who is deeply in love with her husband Gomez, was excellent. Her singing was once again of a very a high quality.

### WEDNESDAY (EMILY AUSTIN)

Having seen Emily in her last stage performance as Maria in *The Sound of Music*, I can agree that these two parts were so different! I loved her characterization of Wednesday, the eldest child. She looked the part, and her facial expressions were brilliant. Her singing was a delight. This was another excellent performance.

### FESTER (WILLIAM BRANSTON)

William really got under the skin of the Fester and portrayed a very believable character, complete with eccentric mannerisms. I was disappointed that the references to his electric charge was not in

the script but delighted that it was introduced in the walk down, with Fester creating a lit light bulb in his mouth. His singing was excellent, although owing to the wonderful gruff voice he adopted, his diction was a little difficult to hear at times. I noticed in the second half he sung without the gruff voice to great effect. Overall this was a skillful performance by William.

**GRANDMA (HELEN NICHOLSON)**

The eccentric grandma Addams was nicely performed by Helen. Her exaggerated movement was characteristic of an elderly person, but wondered if it was a little too over played? Her coughing and spluttering was skillfully handled.

**PUGSLEY (MAX BOOTH)**

As the younger child of *The Addams Family*, Max portrayed a performance that defies his age. He understood what the character was about, showing wonderful pouting, good facial expressions (especially when he realised that Alice drunk the potion). He showed great composure in his solo *What If*, keeping in character and showing no signs of nerves. With a performance like this, this young man shows great promise.

**LURCH (TONY COLLINS)**

With hardly a word to say, Tony was very good as the manservant. His mime routine with the Beinekes was excellent! As was his singing in the song *Move Toward the Darkness*. He never came out of character (not until the curtain call when I noticed a little wave!) and kept his zombie like mannerisms throughout.

**MAL BEINEKE (MARK CONOLLY)**

**ALICE BEINEKE (LAURA HARTLEY)**

The parents of Lucas, the love interest of Wednesday, portrayed good characters. Accents were maintained throughout. Laura's singing was excellent, as I have now come to expect, but her acting was probably the best I have seen. She seems to get better and better! Mark is a seasoned performer and easily portrayed Mal.

**LUCAS BEINEKE (ALEX HARVEY-BROWN)**

This was a lovely performance by Alex, who portrayed a believable love interest for Wednesday. He produced a good strong, confident singing voice and consistent accent. There was good chemistry between Lucas and Wednesday. Also good delivery of lines, particularly "I can be impulsive – I have just got to think about it"!

**PRINCIPAL ANCESTORS**

**(FAYE TIMS, AMY WILLIAMS, CAROLINE WEBB, KATIE LIGHT, REBECCA ROGERS, HANNAH PIKE, GARY SMITH, DAMIAN THOMAS, JUSTIN FERRINGTON, NYCK MOORE, PETER WINN & SIMON LIGHT)**

All of these performers perfectly produced their characters. From the opening song, they produced their ghoulish roles and maintained them throughout. It was a shame that there was a microphone issue so that I could not hear one of the soloists (Damian) but all of the others that I did hear sung wonderfully. The dancing (in particular, *Live Before We Die* and *The Moon and Me*) was excellent.

### **CHORUS OF ANCESTORS**

I was pleased to see that all of the chorus had characterisation, and maintained them throughout the show. Throughout the opening song, the chorus was perfect - with everyone keeping character the entire time. Singing and movement was of a high standard. Entrances and exits were swift and very well rehearsed.

### **DIRECTOR (LUKE BURTON)**

Luke must be delighted with the outcome of this production as all the cast showed an excellent understanding of the style of the show. The pace was keen, entrances and exits were prompt and characterisation cannot be faulted. I note that the stage musical has Wednesday as an eighteen year-old (the original TV show had her as the youngest child) but think this way round works better. The accents were very well maintained by the cast throughout. The casting was very good. The opening scene, set in the family graveyard, could have benefited with a smoke effect. This would have made the appearance of the ancestors a little more chilling and keeping with that scene. From my seat in the stalls, I could not see the engagement ring as the banisters were in the way and would have liked that reset so that everyone could see the ring. The sight lines (down stage left) also caused a few issues as I could see through at times and the set could have benefited from another flat or a black drape - but these are very small criticisms on what was an excellent all round production.

### **MUSIC DIRECTOR (MARK WEBB)**

This is probably one of the best shows I have seen by CMP – the signing by principals and chorus alike was wonderful. Some of the music was quite complicated yet under the guidance of Mark, this seemed easy!

### **CHOREOGRAPHER (ERIN HOPE PHARO)**

I have seen several shows now that Erin has choreographed and this maintained the high level that I have seen before. This potentially is a difficult show to set – it is not the typical “dance” show yet Erin introduced some interesting moves that pushed the levels of the group. The tango sequence towards the end was very well performed, and *The Moon and Me* was superb. The chorus numbers (the opening number particularly) was excellently performed. Well done!

### **STAGE MANAGER (IAN ROBERTSON)**

#### **DSM (DUNCAN BRUCE)**

The stage was comfortably managed without any noticeably glitches. The scenes easily moved from one to another. The pace of the show was maintained at a good level. All of the effects were on cue.

### **LIGHTING DESIGN (MICHAEL BRENKLEY)**

#### **LIGHTING OPERATOR (KARL KING)**

This is quite a difficult set to light – as not only were there different areas to light, but also care and consideration had to be taken for the different levels (in the mansion), in front and behind the gauze. As always, Michael produced a good plot. A variety of colours and some good effects (the lightning bolt, for example). Some of the transitions when the characters moved from area to area were a little dark (but this is probably more to the pace of the actors than the poor operators!) The cues were very well executed without any noticeable hitches.

### **SOUND (TOM HORROX)**

Overall the sound quality and cues were excellent although there were a few microphone issues (either not working or not switched on) and some of the diction was difficult to pick up. The balance between the orchestra and singers was just right.

### **PROPERTIES (PETER WINN)**

Despite the somewhat bizarre list of props, they were adequately sourced and all seemed perfect to the time and location of the production. The chair looked effective, the working cross bow added to the overall effect. The chaise lounge and other stage props looked authentic. The setting of the two black tablecloths could have been a little better placed (but considering they were set in the dark, you did remarkably well!)

### **STAGE DESIGN (VICTORIA SPEARING)**

The set looked amazing and having the different levels, served by the dual flight of stairs, made the production visually very interesting. The swing wall, revealing Pugsley's torture chamber, ingeniously ensured the pace did not drop.

### **COSTUME DESIGN AND WARDROBE (JANET WINN)**

I was very impressed with the detail that had gone into this production. All of the principal part costumes clearly identified their roles. I liked the contrast of the black (for the living) and the whites and greys for the dead. All of the costumes looked like they fitted perfectly. I loved Morticia's dress - how clever to have the front lift up and tuck behind for the tango dances! The principal ancestors and chorus ancestors looked wonderful in their whites and faded grey outfits, however, I thought the maid's black was too dark. There is probably a good reason (which I did not pick up) but this is a very small point as the costumes, the various styles, periods, characters, were excellent! Wigs were also very well sourced and applied (especially Morticia!)

### **MAKEUP (LINDA PEACOCK)**

I understand that Linda had some assistance from **DEBBIE MANN** on makeup and wigs and no wonder as this was a huge undertaking and one that you should be applauded. The makeup on all characters was perfect. All of the principals looked their parts, with the black sunken eyes. All of the ancestors looked adequately whitened. Morticia looked pale and Gomez Latin-American. I would have liked to see more wrinkles applied to Grandma, certainly from my seat (and I was in E row), the wrinkles were not noticeable.

### **FRONT OF HOUSE**

I was warmly welcomed by the very busy front of house. The programme and ticket were immediately available and my ticket offered an excellent view.

### **PROGRAMME**

This was an excellent programme with a mixture of colour and black and white photographs. It contained all the usual helpful items such as interesting biographies, song, cast and production lists – but it also contained some very interesting articles. I particularly enjoyed reading the background to the props, set and costume designers and wished other societies did the same. This 24 page

programme is one of the best I have seen and recommend that it is entered into the NODA programme competition.

This is the first time I have seen this show and my goodness, what an excellent production it was! In my view, this was CMP's best show that I have seen, with only a few very minor, picky points. The production team have clearly worked hard but the cast, orchestra and back stage teams have all excelled in producing an excellent, enjoyable show.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Bird'.

**Gordon Bird**  
***NODA representative***  
***London Region, District 14***