



Society : ENFIELD LIGHT ODS
Production : IOLANTHE
Date : 22/10/2009
Venue : WYLLYOTTS CENTRE
Report by : PAUL M HOLGATE

Report

This was a lively and colourful presentation. Musical support under the direction of Mark Newport was well balanced with good coordination between stage and pit. It was a shame to have a truncated version of the overture; one of Sullivan's best. The orchestra played to a very high standard although the lack of percussion made some numbers seem a little thin.

Direction from Julia Rufey was well paced and showed a clear appreciation for Gilbert's humour. There was a good contrast between settings for Act's I and II. The back-projection used in Act II was a great idea. There seemed to be little dramatic point in changing Iolanthe's dwelling place from a stream to a pond but it makes no difference to the plot.

Good use was made of coloured lighting, particularly for Iolanthe's entrance which was well realised.

There were some problems with microphones on the night that I attended and some sound cues were late.

Having a variety of different kinds of fairy was an inspired idea. Costume and make-up for Strephon and Iolanthe was very effective. Some of the chorus of Peers wore their coronets at a rakish angle (there seemed to be a paucity of Barons). Mountararat and Tolloller should both have Earl's coronets. Private Willis appeared to be wearing a Coldstream bearskin.

The opening number seemed a little unfocussed with too much going on. Likewise, the intro into 'Strephon's a member of Parliament' was covered with too much rhubarb from the chorus. Generally speaking, however, chorus was well balance and most ensemble work was to a very high standard. The 'polyglot' chorus at the end of the Act I finale was outstanding.

Alison Bilsby's vocal timbre is much lighter than that generally associated with the role of Fairy Queen but she more than made up for it with her characterisation which was something of a 'tour de force'.

Corinne Roberts as Phyllis had a distinctive voice and gave good reactions to others on stage although the character should, perhaps, have been a little more bucolic. David Stone's Strephon had a light, lyrical voice that was somewhat overwhelmed by the demands of the Act I duet. He had a fantastic stage-presence and understood well the modern implications of being half a fairy. A very entertaining performance.

Naomi Delamore as Iolanthe had a good range of expression and was perfectly cast as leader of the fairy revels.

John Lynch's Earl Mountararat looked a little uncertain on occasions but gave a good performance with a memorable rendering of 'When Britain really ruled the waves'. Roger Rufey as Tolloller had a supercilious air which suited the part well. He also excelled in his solo 'Spurn not the nobly born'

Howard Wright was a well-drilled, neatly turned-out (fairy) guardsman with a strong and clear singing voice

Everything was neatly held together by John Hebden's well nuanced Lord Chancellor in a thoroughly distressed wig.

She wasn't individually named in the programme but I have in my notes that whoever gave Celia's line 'Our wrath when gentlemen offend us...' gave a particularly noteworthy performance.

The programme was well produced with an interesting colour scheme and clear colour photographs. It may have been a good idea to include a glossary (who understands bombazine or maravedi nowadays?). Thank you for including the Noda crest.

Thank you for your invitation and your hospitality. This was the best production of Iolanthe that I have seen in a long time. I look forward to the Pajama Game next year.