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Society: ELODS
District: L07
Production: ANYTHING GOES
Date: Saturday 17 May 2025
Venue: Wyllotts Theatre
Report By: Thomas Lennon

Show Report

General

The last time I saw a production of this show was at the Barbican Theatre in 2021 when the internationally renowned **Sutton Foster** reprised her Tony-Award winning role as *Reno Sweeney* from the 2011 Broadway production.

I was looking forward to this show as, in my opinion, it was well-matched to the membership of this company. I knew I would enjoy the performance.

Front of House

Wyllotts Theatre is almost like a second home for a certain amount of the year as two of my affiliated societies utilise the venue for their performances.

There was the usual display in the lobby with information and photographs promoting the production. The regular compliment of volunteers, overseen by **Angela Edmunds** and **Helen White**, were on hand selling programmes and raffle tickets to the assembling patrons ahead of the production albeit, a smaller number than expected.

Programme

The 28-page A5 glossy booklet was designed by **Naomi Delamore** with striking artwork by **Roger Bunnage**, with a reduced copy of the production poster as the colourful front cover.

The contents included a note from the Chair, a generous full-page with an introduction to NODA, with lists for the Production Team, musical numbers, the band and the complete outline of past productions of the society. There were also several pages dedicated to rehearsal and past show photographs, biographies for the creatives and cast, an invitation to join the society and a half dozen pages of general advertisements.

The back cover contained the announcement / notification of the society's next production, **OKLAHOMA!**, scheduled for performances in October 2025.

Players

Jude Wren was ideal casting as the successful nightclub headliner *Reno Sweeney*. She had good deportment and exhibited proven stage presence which was reflected in her confident delivery while hiding unrequited romantic feelings. Vocally, she held a consistent tone and pitch throughout while maintaining good precision in her movement. She rose to the challenge - a true triple threat as a performer.

Players (*continued*)

Francesca Goodyear was the timid quiet spoken American debutante / heiress *Hope Harcourt* affianced to the English Lord whom she doesn't love but is willing to marry. She is eagerly pursued by *Billy* who stows away onboard but has resigned herself to her fate to honour her mother's wishes and maintain her family's social standing. An honest interpretation of the role.

Steve Berman was a striking *Billy Crocker* with the stature and stage presence that drew your attention. He displayed a cool confidence no matter what the situation and proved himself physically adept in his characterisation. His vocal had a pleasing rich quality and he possessed good comic timing. This individual has developed from previous productions – a talented performance overall.

Rosie Cennamo epitomised the impulsive but loveably clueless *Erma Latour* who's wandering eye managed to turn the head of every man within her immediate vicinity which she totally played upon at every given opportunity. She had a beautiful fluidity to her movement and worked well opposite her partner in crime, *Moonface Martin*.

Roger Bunnage brought a likeability to *Moonface Martin* who, as he was wanted by Police, was disguised as a priest to hide his Public Enemy persona. In his efforts to defend *Billy*, unmasked for not being the suspected *Snake Eyes*, they both got thrown in the brig from where he attempted to cheer his cell mate with his rendition of 'Be Like The Bluebird'. A poignant moment in the chaos.

Henry Martin portrayed the self-assured aristocrat *Lord Evelyn Oakley* with a typical English accent and the exaggerated facial expressions and mannerisms associated to eccentrics of his class. Though engaged to the heiress *Hope*, his true feelings for *Reno* became apparent in his rendition of 'The Gypsy In Me' while also revealing the family secret of his ancestry. An energetic performance with a clear vocal in this role.

Stephen Milligan breathed a personality into the near-sighted functional drunk and business tycoon *Elisha J Whitney*, who was depending on a business venture to save his finances. Little did he know what lay ahead for him on the voyage and the financial outcome that awaited him.

Corinne Roberts gave the ambitious *Evangeline Harcourt* a no-nonsense demeanour in her desire to ensure her daughter married well, and by well she meant 'into money'. Her need to save her family name and status was her priority in the wake of their financial ruin from 'the crash'.

Mirza Malik as the *Purser* conveyed the very strict sense of structure to actual onboard life with his regular announcements and operational reminders keeping everything ship shape.

Peter Kellett as the ship's *Captain* employed a rather laid-back approach to his commission appearing to function more as a figure head in his onboard role.

Les Gershman proved himself more than capable as the missionary *Minister Henry T Dobson*.

Hannah Rourke and **Mark Tobin** created mayhem above and below decks in the absence of their mentor, the *Minister*, as the pickpocketing and gambling duo *Dippy* and *Spit*.

Players (*continued*)

As Reno's Angels, **Maria Kleanthous** as *Purity*, **Jemma Hickman** as *Chastity*, **Marian Lynch** as *Charity* and **Alice Jolly** as *Virtue* provided backup as her singers / dancers for her nightclub act.

Ensemble

The remaining company performed well in various minor roles. Entrances and exits were well-executed with members being used regularly for groupings / pictures to dress scenes. Vocal harmonies were balanced with good diction and projection as is usual from this group, despite the obvious lack of men.

Costumes

Nic Corden and **Fiona Corden** facilitated a vast array of costumes for this large company of players. From sailor suits to period costumes for the heiress and her mother, to theatrical outfits for Reno and her Angels, the selection had the usual attention to detail previously seen from this group.

Sets

The main set for the deck of the S.S. American was impressive and had been designed as two levels with access to the upper level by way of stairs at both sides. The set had several windows, portholes and the appropriate handrails and safety barriers to represent the main deck. It had been painted to a very high standard with two additional trucks secreted beneath the upper level which both opened to represent cabins aboard the ship.

Additionally, the ship's brig had been established on the apron at stage right therefore only requiring to be lit as required during the performance.

Congratulations to **Michelle Williams**, **Corinne Roberts**, **David Dowse**, **Gregor Lusty** and **Sunny Carter** for their collaboration on the set design and painting with the set creation attributed to **Mark Shaw** and **Frank Bundle**.

Props

A generous selection of props were provided by **Katie Passey**, **Helen Wikeley** and their team to compliment the pristine set.

Stage Management

With the set already in place, **Mark Shaw**, assisted by **Cathryn Hunt**, and their crew made it look easy to effect the minimal changes required for the individual scenes, Even the setting and striking of the trucks from beneath the upper level for the cabins worked like clockwork.

Lighting

The lighting plot, designed and operated by **John Castle**, appropriately lit the production with the assistance of lighting operators **Greg Wedge**, **Carmel Hendry** and **Dylan Bunyan**.

Sound

The sound plot, designed and operated by **Jacob Holmes**, ensured that every spoken word, sung vocal and music note played could be appreciated by every member of the ticket paying patrons no matter where they were seated within the theatre.

Orchestra

The pit was generously populated with 10 musicians which included a piano, 3 x reed, 2 x trumpet, a trombone, a violin, a bass and drums / percussion.

Initially, I felt that the overture was a little loud however, once the main performance started my worries were allayed as the volume from the pit settled and balanced for the voices onstage.

Musical Director

With **Mark Newport** at the helm musically, you always know you are in for a memorable production. In this his 77th production, spanning over 35 years, he led the orchestra through a lively interpretation of this memorable Cole Porter score with great energy and pace while the harmonies from the chorus were balanced with good diction and projection.

Choreographer

Paula Bland, no stranger as a creative to the group, created choreography to mirror the upbeat nature of the score. She cleverly devised her group routines with good content, generous spacing and movement that pushed the company to their capabilities. The closing numbers of both acts were well executed and exciting to watch in performance.

Director

Natalie O'Sullivan, who previously directed **THE DROWSY CHAPERONE** in 2018, cast well from the membership for this production and kept a tight rein on her directing. She cleverly blocked smaller scenes tightly to centre the attention of the audience. The creative team, conscious of the backstage restrictions, cleverly commissioned an impressive main set, as previously outlined.

In summation, another successful production from the creatives and membership of ELODS. Well done to everyone involved.

NODA Website Production Summary

Jude Wren was ideal casting as *Reno Sweeney* while **Steve Berman** was a striking *Billy Crocker*.

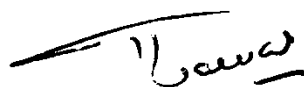
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Another successful production from the creatives and membership of ELODS.

My appreciation to Emma and her committee for the invitation to the production, to Natalie for her company before the show and for the hospitality afforded me on my visit to Wylllyotts.

I trust you all enjoyed performing as much as your patrons enjoyed the performance.

Sincerely,



THOMAS LENNON

NODA London District 7 Regional Representative

NODA London Poster & Programme Competition:

Should the company wish to enter either competition, please refer to the London section of the main NODA website at the following location;

<https://www.noda.org.uk/regions/london/noda-london-poster-programme-competition>

for eligibility criteria, rules and entry forms for both.

Entries are now being accepted for productions between 01 January 2025 and 31 December 2025.

Dates For Your Diary:**NODA London AGM & Celebration Day 2025**

Sunday 22 June 2025 (*full details to follow in due course*)

NODA Theatre Summer School 2025

Saturday 26 July 2025 to Saturday 02 August 2025 (*full details now available online*)

NODA AGM & Presidential Gala 2025

Saturday 27 September 2025 (*full details to follow in due course*)

