



Society : Enfield Light Operatic and Dramatic Society  
Production : Parade  
Date : 20 October 2017  
Venue : Wyllyotts Theatre  
Report by : Paul M Holgate

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## Show Report

A breath-taking production of Jason Robert Brown's dark and challenging piece.

Musical support directed, as ever, from the keyboard by Mark Newport was to the highest standard with an excellent balance between the pit and the stage. Chorus managed the complicated score with considerable skill and displayed good enunciation. There was a lot of individual characterisation.

The Single set, dominated by a large and rather stark tree in the centre, was an inspired design and it was interesting to observe how it took on a different aspect, according to how it was lit. The LX plot worked well although several cross-fades were too sudden. Good use was made of gobos for closing in scenes where characters were in captivity. *You don't know this man* was beautifully lit and the back-lighting of the chain gang was very effective.

Direction from Simon Knight was assured with very precise choreography. Entrances and exits, such as there were, well covered. The whole of the performing area was made use of. Movement during the factory girls' testimony, the chain gang and *Where will you stand when the flood comes?* were particularly striking. *Big News* with a great central performance from Nic Corden in a part that he clearly relished was also very well staged. Musical numbers were brought well down and duologues were well positioned. Blocking for Frank's confrontation with Mary Phagan and *The Glory* were exceptional. Attention had been paid to sightlines. Big ensemble numbers were positioned well with good stage pictures for *Dream of Atlanta* and the finale. Costumes, coiffure and make-up all conformed to period. Wigs had been well selected and applied.

A very strong cast was spearheaded by Matthew Greenbank as Leo Frank who gave a compelling interpretation. The change of character in *Come up to My Office* was as remarkable as it was chilling. He had good stage presence and a believable characterisation.

Bonnie Widger was a wonderfully insouciant Mary Phagan, whose numerous enigmatic appearances as the plot developed were haunting in every sense.

Katrina Boyd excelled in the part of Lucille Frank showing how much the character has to suffer, both before and after Frank's conviction. She had a convincing accent which was maintained during both singing and speech. A superb portrayal.

Opening the show as the 'young soldier'. Henry Martin wandered a little – arguably in character but it did distract from the vocal. He appeared more comfortable as Frankie Epps in a very engaging duet with Bonnie and, despite being upstaged by the pack during the funeral gave a very moving performance.

Company debutante Andre Beswick as Jim Conley gave a dynamic rendition of *That's what he said*, which drew deserved approbation from the audience.

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Also debuting with the company, Kaine Lawrence made a great impression in a dual role as a somewhat sinister Newt Lee and the exuberant Riley, paired with Sescia Grelet as Angela in *A rumblin' and a rollin'*

Andy Nicol added to his oeuvre of villains as the despicable Hugh Dorsey while Stephen Milligan was perfectly cast as Governor Slaton which made *Pretty Music* a highlight of the show.

Mention should also be made of Mrs Phagan, memorably portrayed by a barely recognisable Sarah Henderson and Matt Fowler as the sympathetic Tom Watson. The trio of factory girls' precise movements and plaintive singing also made for a memorable scene.

The programme centre spread had an interesting collection of cuttings. Cast photos were clear. One of the captions was reversed. Thank you for including a Noda credit. Please consider entering your programme and posters for the annual competition, details are on our website.

Thank you for your invitation and your hospitality. I look forward to seeing *The Drowsy Chaperone*.

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