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Society : ELODS
Production : The Drowsy Chaperone
Date : 27 April 2018
Venue : Wylyotts Theatre
Report by : Paul M Holgate

Show Report

Following the grim, though well-produced *Parade*, this production of Lambert and Morrison's piece was a return to lighter fare.

Musical support was to the usual high standard directed, as ever, from the keyboard by Mark Newport. With three brassy and two percussionists in the pit, one struggled to hear voices on stage at times, most notably during *Man in Chair's* opening dialogue.

The set was well designed and allowed the large cast to assemble on stage without difficulty.

Natalie O'Sullivan making her directorial debut with the company, directed with precision, keeping action well down-stage. Chorus movement was well co-ordinated and dance moves from Rosie Cennamo were well drilled. Entrances and exits were covered. Very good ensemble work during the complex *Show Off*.

LX/FX effects were on cue and the stage was adequately lit at all times. A perfect magenta wash for the beginning of *Show Off* and good use of the cloud gobos for *I Do, I Do in the Sky*. The start of the pool scene needed fresher tones to show a change of milieu.

Costuming was excellent with a particularly good selection for Janet, *Man in Chair* Mrs Tottendale, *Drowsy* and Janet. Ladies make-up was a little restrained for the period – most ladies in the cast required heavier eye make-up and more blusher.

David Adams was well cast as *Man in Chair* with exceptional comic timing and a good grasp of character. At times, the audience seemed enrapt by his commanding stage presence as his complex back-story was revealed. A highly creditable performance.

Jude Stoughton was a vivacious Janet Van de Graaff with a clear sense of fun. She was well matched with Steven Berman's debonair Robert Martin though they share very little stage time. *Accident Waiting to Happen* was very effective – I am always in awe of anyone who can sing and act on roller skates.

Sarah Henderson gave a tour-de-force of a performance as the title character with impeccable timing. Always a believable soak rather than a caricature lush. *As We Stumble Along* was delivered with gusto in a voice rather like Ethel Merman and a demeanour that was reminiscent of Lily Tomlin. She had some great comic interplay with Adrian Ramagge as Aldolpho whose broad comedic delivery was highly entertaining, especially the song. I loved his glance at the audience during the dropped cane scene.

Also presenting a brilliant double act were Sandra Ashworth as a marvellously dotty Mrs Tottendale and Richard Hutchinson as the long-suffering Underling.

Henry Martin as the perpetually harassed George created a very believable character. He excelled in the duet with Robert.

Trix, the aviatrix, very ably played by Katy Clementson gets very little to do and the rather implausible plot resolution was thrown away. *I Do I Do in the Sky* was very effectively staged.

Stephen Milligan was a perfect Feldzieg, adding another permanently perplexed character to his résumé, a perfect foil to Emily Kennedy Neal as the dizzy Kitty who had an engaging smile and was fun to watch. Roger Bunnage and Nic Corden were an excellent pair of gangsters, or pasty cooks with some very funny business during *Toledo Surprise*.

The programme had a colourful cover and included a number of interesting photographs. Cast photos were clear. The photo behind the musical numbers list was a good idea but made it difficult to read. Thank you for including a NODA credit. Please consider entering your programmes and posters for the annual competition.

I thought this was a colourful and engaging show and perfect for lightening the mood in these troubled times. I congratulate Natalie and Rosie on their company debut in their respective roles.

Many thanks for your invitation and your kind hospitality to me in the years I have been NODA Rep for your district. I wish you every success in the future and look forward to seeing future presentations by your society.

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