



Society : ELODS
Production: SINGIN' IN THE RAIN
Date : Friday 20 October 2023
Venue : Wyllotts Theatre

Report by : Thomas Lennon

[**Show**](#)

Report

General

The stage musical is based on the classic Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film which starred Gene Kelly, Debbie Reynolds and Donald O'Connor and was faithfully and lovingly adapted by Broadway legends Betty Comden and Adolph Green from their original award-winning screenplay. It is generally regarded as 'The Greatest Movie Musical of All Time'.

Front of House

The box office / reception area was very busy when I arrived as, the show had an almost capacity audience on the evening I attended. There was a programme seller who was positively interacting with patrons as they arrived and there was also a display of raffle prizes around which several committee members / ticket vendors circulated selling raffle tickets.

As always, the committee members were very welcoming and there was a definite air of anticipation among the assembled audience ahead of the performance.

Programme

The A4 glossy programme comprised of 32 pages inclusive of the cover dedicated to the production with a note from the Chair, a show synopsis, a list of musical numbers, and biographies for the creative team and cast members.

There was an article on the society to recognise the recently celebrated Platinum Jubilee and a summary from their musical director detailing his association with the society over the past 37 years. The centre spread contained a list of all society members past and present, a separate page with an emotive memorial to four previous society members plus several additional pages dedicated to production pictures and posters from previous productions.

The remaining content included some advertisements for two other local productions, an appreciation to the filmmakers who the society had collaborated with for the production, the introduction to NODA, a society membership update and a casting announcement and poster for the company's next production.

A colourful memento of the evening and their Platinum Jubilee for their patrons.

Players

Haydn Boxall brought a confident air to his performance as *Don Lockwood*. He used his stature to his advantage giving him good stage presence in the role while displaying versatility in both his acting and dancing abilities with a natural vocal delivery.

Jude Stoughton delivered a well-rounded characterisation of *Kathy Seldon* which showcased her obvious dancing ability paired with an equally strong vocal. It was apparent she was comfortable within the role and enjoyed the experience of this production.

Players (*continued*)

Henry Martin proved an adequate sidekick in his portrayal of *Cosmo Brown* though, as he highlighted within his biography, the dancing was a challenge. More confident in shared musical numbers his uncertainty of the choreography in his main solo made it feel a little under rehearsed.

Molly Wells provided an initial naïve and laid-back demeanour to her characterisation of *Lina Lamont* which, in tandem with her high pitch spoken vocal, utilised her comedic lines to their potential. This made her obvious change in demeanour in the latter part of the show more dramatic and believable.

Roger Bunnage gave us an easily stressed film director in his role as *Roscoe Dexter* who, while trying to master his first attempt at a 'talkie', was pushed to his limits with his leading lady and her antics.

Katie Passey was a brassy and vengeful *Zelda* who took great pleasure in making her friend aware of the other relationship of her so called 'fiancé' and co-star.

Stephen Milligan was cool in the role of film producer *R F Simpson* at Monumental Pictures who was the driving force behind the studio's first 'talkie'.

Nic Corden brought an agitated edge to his portrayal of *Rod* as the excitable film agent and right-hand man to the studio head.

Other minor roles were managed competently by various members of the company which included a strong vocal from **Adrian Ramagge** as the *Production Tenor* and the memorable scene between *Lina* and her vocal coach *Miss Dinsmore*, portrayed by **Rosie Cennamo**, played to good comedic effect.

Ensemble

The company were well rehearsed on their entrances and exits which was evident by the lack of 'bottle necking' and considering the absence of wing space at stage right. Energy and enthusiasm levels were good as was the volume of singing in the choral numbers.

Costumes, Hair & Make-Up

The costumes, overseen by **Nic Corden**, were generally appropriate to the period and were appealing to the eye however, some avoidable details distracted here and there. While these details feel small overall, they did draw attention and similar issues should be avoided whenever possible. These included white socks with black trousers, ill-fitting trousers, unbuttoned knickerbocker cuffs, two ladies in evening wear in a day scene, a nude pair of character shoes that should have been black and men's clip on braces - not appropriate for the period.

Wigs, where utilised, were well worn and make-up was well applied.

Sets & Props

The main stage had an extra-large screen upstage centre flanked by two French style windows. Additionally, a very recognisable lamppost was strategically placed at downstage right. The main performance area was left empty and unset to be minimally furnished throughout the production.

There was no shortage of props, facilitated by **John Stivey**, reflecting the period and they were utilised appropriately during the show.

Projections & Filming

To enhance the minimal staging, the team made use of projections designed by **John Port**, (Groundhouse Media), to add some depth and atmosphere to the staging. While the majority worked well, they all contained the basic Monumental Pictures studio arch overlaid with the content required for the individual scenes, which was occasionally distracting.

Additionally, having previously seen productions both with and without actual water effects, the rain projection used worked adequately for the production.

The silent film sequences, designed and produced by **Potters Bar Filmmakers**, were recreated in black and white true to the original film and worked well within the context of the production.

Stage Management

Victoria Santamaria Cannaford, (Stage Manager), **Hannah Frost**, (Assistant Stage Manager), and their team took full advantage of making light work of the required scene changes for the remaining items outside the scope of the projections.

Lighting & Sound

The lighting for the production, by **John Castle**, was appropriate and well executed. While I was initially dubious of the impact it may have on the screen projections, my worries were unnecessary.

Production sound, by **Jacob Holmes**, had some issues on the evening I attended with *Don's* personal mic failing and *Lina's* emitting a repetitive click during one of her numbers. Other than that, the sound overall was well balanced in the main.

Orchestra

From the overture, the 11-strong musicians, made up of 4 reed, 2 trumpets, a trombone, a violin, a bass, drums / percussion and a pianist, demonstrated a high standard of musicality for such a limited number of players. They worked well together as a unit and gave great life to this memorable score.

Musical Director

Mark Newport, (Musical Director), a successful musician himself, exhibited his many years of experience at the helm of this obviously well-rehearsed group. Both individual vocals and group harmonies were to a high standard under his guidance and the society are extremely lucky to have such an accomplished individual, who has been associated with the society for more than 35 years, leading their productions musically.

Choreographer

David Adams, (Choreographer), in addition to his tenure as Chairperson, set the cast an energetic mix of tap and modern dance for the numerous well know numbers in this show. Though some proved challenging in performance for individuals his routines provided a good overall interpretation of the score for this iconic show.

Director

Paula Bland, (Director), cleverly set most of the principal scenes centrally, unburdened by the restriction of a large set and providing all her audiences good sight lines, no matter where they were seated. Her choreographic experience also worked to her advantage and was particularly evident in her movement of the chorus in group scenes. With good principal casting, the result was a totally refreshing version of what has, since the original film, become an iconic musical. A production to be proud of.

NODA Website Production Summary

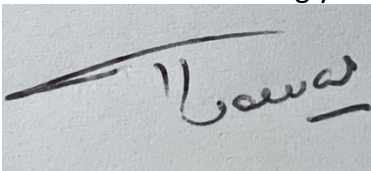
This production had good principal casting with minor roles managed competently by various members of the company.

The 11-strong orchestra gave great life to this memorable score while the company delivered an energetic mix of tap and modern dance for the well know numbers.

The result was a totally refreshing version of what has, since the original film, become an iconic musical. A production to be proud of.

My sincere thanks to David and the committee at ELODS for the invitation to your Autumn production.

I look forward to seeing you all again at a future production.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Lennon", with a long horizontal line above it.

THOMAS LENNON

NODA London Regional Representative - District 7