



Society : ELODS
Production : The Scarlet Pimpernel
Date : 20/04/2023
Venue : Wyllyotts Theatre
Report by : Paul M Holgate

Show Report

This energetic piece was a good showcase for a talented company.

Musical support directed, as ever, by Mark Newport was to the highest standard. Apart from a few instances when soloists' voices were too far back in the mix, there was a good balance. Chorus had notably good enunciation and volume.

Costuming looked excellent throughout with a particularly ingenious design for ensemble, which could be adapted, as necessary for the different characters portrayed. The priest was inappropriately dressed in a chasuble while giving absolution. The bounders' dandy costumes were most colourful and helped to make *The Creation of Man* a show stopping number.

LX plot was very effective and well cued. Red tab warmers were a simple and pleasing effect. The blue wash during the final verse of *Into the Fire* added much to the scene. Good use of pin spotting on several of the solo numbers.

The split-level set was put to good use. Scene changes were fast and efficient. A badly adjusted drape on SR gave a view of performers and crew in the right wing.

Direction from Fiona Corden paid good attention to sightlines. She demonstrated a considerable flair for creating memorable stage pictures, notably the positioning of Marie, Percy and Marguerite during *When I Look at You* and the positioning on stage during *The Riddle*. The business of the incriminating letter, very early in Act I, an important plot point was skilfully staged.

The several chase and rescue scenes were artfully blocked, considering the limited size of the stage. Stage combat was neatly arranged.

Choreography from Claire Viccars was appropriate to the setting with some beautifully stylized moves in the masquerade which opened the second act. A few ensemble members were shuffling onto their marks in the opening number, pulling focus a little.

Nevertheless, chorus work was some of the best I have ever seen from this company, whose work in this area I have always rated highly. One could tell that all ensemble members had thought about character and motivation. Background acting during *I'll Forget You* was outstanding.

Corinne Roberts made a huge impression as Marguerite St Juste. An intriguing character with an interesting back-story which gave her a lot of scope. She was always in character and gave a sparkling performance of the opening number. *I'll Forget You* was very moving.

Nic Corden handled the complex and vocally challenging character of Sir Percy Blakeny with characteristic ease. I loved his characterisation of the shadowy Grappin. He performed the demanding *She Was There* with considerable gusto.

David Adams used his phenomenal stage-presence to good effect as the villainous Chauvelin. I very much enjoyed his delivery of *Falcon in the Dive* – a terrific performance. .

The faithful and brave Armand suited Henry Martin well and I thought that he brought a lot to the character.

Sandra Ashworth made an absolutely superb Prince of Wales. Also worth of note were Naomi Delamore as Marie and Yanqing Cheng as Tussaud. I very much enjoyed Roger Bunnage's appearance as Robespierre.

The front cover of the programme was a little busy though the design was striking. As usual it contained a lot of interesting information. Thank you for including extra information about NODA. Please consider entering your programme for the competition. I will attach an entry form.

Many thanks for your invitation. Pam and I enjoyed meeting members of the cast and production team after the performance. My congratulations on a terrific show. I look forward to seeing further presentations by your society.