

SOCIETY: ENFIELD LIGHT ODS
PRODUCTION: THE WIZARD OF OZ (RSC version)
DATE: 01/04/2009
VENUE: WYLLYOTTS CENTRE
REPORT BY: PAUL M HOLGATE

This was an energetic performance. Musical support under the direction of Mark Newport was well balanced with good coordination between stage and pit.

Direction from John Hebden brought out a lot of the humour in the script. Choreography was simple and well executed with no performers pulling focus. Entrances and exits were sound. Sightlines were well observed. Chorus was generally well-drilled, including child performers. Good singing volume although more attention to diction was required in places. Munchkinland and the poppy dance were both very well done.

Costuming was colourful and vibrant, complementing the back-drop and set. Jitterbug costumes were a good idea. Crows, trees and Winkies in particular were well-realised. Uncle Henry's hat appeared to be a size too small. Tin-man's costume seemed to interfere with his radio-mike. Excellent make-up, notably for the Lion and the munchkins. It's a shame that in this version Hunk Zeke and Hickory have to appear again as 'themselves' as they appeared in the final scene shiny-faced and, understandably, somewhat out of breath!

Good use was made of coloured lighting and gobos and this, combined with excellent set design and construction from Frank made each scene distinctive. I intend to enter this production for the regional scenic design award. The rainbow in Dorothy's solo a simple and effective idea although she wandered into a black area during the song.

Naomi Delamor as Dorothy appeared more comfortable playing the more self-confident character of the later scenes than the timid and frightened Dorothy of the opening. Good reactions to the munchkins and other Oz characters.

Marie Ibister was a great Aunt Em and portrayed Glinda well, if a little understated. She was occasionally upstaged in crowd scenes.
Les Gershman brought a lot to the parts of both Uncle Henry and the Emerald City Guard.

Sunny Carter's Hunk/Scarecrow gave a very physical performance with good dance moves and 'scarecrow demeanour. Always in character, she was a joy to watch.
Nic Corden seemed less self-assured than the other companions although this was, arguably, in character with the 'heartless' tinman and dreaming Hickory.
Martin Ibister was an ebullient Zeke/Lion with a distinctive voice and had great stage presence. A very bold portrayal.

Helen White as Miss Gulch and the Wicked Witch of the West was clearly enjoying playing the villain and created a distinctive character for each part.

Mark Shaw, in his first principal role for the company gave a good account of the Wizard and was a very effective Professor Chester Marvel with an interesting and compelling reading of the caravan scene.

The programme cover was a busy, yet striking design. The cast-list was difficult to interpret but the general layout was very good with clear photographs and a nice use of colour. Please remember that the Noda crest should be paired with the words 'affiliated to the National Operatic and Dramatic Association'.

Thank you for your invitation and your hospitality. I much enjoyed my visit and look forward to seeing Iolanthe later this year.