

Society : ELODS
Production : The Wedding Singer
Date : 15th May 2026
Venue : Wylllyotts Theatre, Potters Bar
District : District 7

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Show Report

Thank you for your invitation to see my first ever ELODS show. I can't quite believe it's taken me this long to get to one of your productions but on the evidence of watching The Wedding Singer, it's me who has greatly missed out. I don't think I have been to Wylllyotts before either, so the evening was a delightful treat of firsts.

The Wedding Singer is a good choice of show if a society has plenty of energetic members able to perform the 80s style numbers. There are opportunities for lots of people to have their moment to shine and provide cameos, including 'the fakes', waitresses, wedding guests and family members. I counted 36 in the cast, 8 band members, a crew of over 10 plus FoH and all the others. That's a battalion and, of course, the way a company builds active members is to put on big shows for them to participate in. The teamwork and fun everyone was having came across to your audience and made for a very enjoyable experience.

Front of House

The foyer on the Friday evening was bustling with an expectant audience of friends and families. The welcome from the team to everybody made for a warm reception and the pleasure of sitting in a largely full auditorium, feeling the buzz of expectation, was a delight. I liked the display of oversized Rubik cubes surrounding the photos of cast members' weddings, a great idea that brought the show theme into the foyer.

Thank you for the excellent programme with lots to read and look at. The smiling faces were lovely and better than a bland cast listing. The colourful rehearsal photo collage was attention-grabbing and advertising forthcoming shows keeps your regulars well informed. Looking down the past productions informed us that The Wedding Singer was a new show for ELODS, another first.

Direction

Congratulations to Fiona Corden on directing an excellent show and moving a large cast on, off and around the stage with pace and apparent ease. The show launched into a big number that looked and sounded great. The impact of It's Your Wedding Day set the tone of the show, presenting good looking people who could sing, dance and enjoyed performing.

There were many lovely details such as the sustained chord and looks around when Robbie and Julia first meet; the slinging of Robbie into the dumpster which was cleverly positioned on the floor; the stand Rosie with flips and cartwheels; the flying dollar bills at the end of Green which enabled Holly and Julia to sweep them up in the following scene was smart.

I really liked the girls entering the toilets for Pop! and then the curtains opening to reveal the restaurant for the next scene. The freeze of the engaged couples at the tables and the waiters' kiss that got a heart-warming cheer were nice touches. The contrast between the first wedding and that of Donatella and Shane was well depicted with the Table 9 mutants and high whining bride "hurting my feelings ". There were many good examples of a well-disciplined ensemble that remained sufficiently controlled whilst reacting to the story.

Robbie emerging from the dumpster and straight into the bar mitzva scene was slick. It was interesting that you chose not to make a large chorus scene of the bar mitzva but rather have Robbie, the band and Julia talk out front as if to the guests. This also enabled the slow intimate dance between Robbie and Julia to take centre stage, a nice touch.

I was interested to see Simply Wet positioned downstage right on the extension rather than centre stage on the upper level. It did bring the three of them further forward but perhaps being at the back on the main stage would have made them more part of the parties and disguised a little better their miming of the instruments. They were rather exposed and played into the fake theme introduced later on in Vegas.

The staging of the upstage two levels gave some height variation. This particularly worked well for Robbie and Julia in If I told You which echoed the Romeo and Juliet balcony scene; both R&Js. I also liked the aeroplane cut out that enabled Julia to show her woeful look into the distance.

Choreography

It was a joy to watch the outstanding choreography of Peri-Jayne Dela Cruz. We were impressed by the variety of movements and enjoyed the nods to Thriller and Vogue. The dance routines were creatively choreographed and although complex were well within the range of ELODS' fine troop of excellent dancers. The precision of the foot work on the synchronised routines was really good and everyone worked hard to keep in time.

The white bridal gowns being held as they swept down the centre steps was great fun. Not That Kind of Thing and Pop! were other routines performed with precision and skill. All About the Green was possibly my favourite number with the sharp black and white business outfits finished with the iconic braces and the party feeling giving a Wolf of Wall Street nod. The energy in Saturday Night in the City was electric and with the rocking DJ showed the ensemble at their very best. I liked the slow-motion movements and some slightly outrageous freestyle moves.

The final It's Your Wedding Day was joyous and most of the audience probably wanted to get up on stage and join in. It felt like a terrific party and I liked the inclusion of some of the elements of the opening number, particularly the circles around the happy couple.

Peri-Jayne must have been delighted to be able to work with such talented dancers but someone has to train and coach them as well as create the routines. Well done on some fine choreography.

Music

Another of the standout aspects was the quality of the singing. The pop style songs suited this talented cast but, with many great voices, Mark Newport had plenty of raw material to work with. I suspect having so many good singers in the company drives everyone to give of their best but I don't underestimate the work that must have been put in during rehearsals to achieve such a high standard.

It was good to have a live band. In these days of spiralling costs, the move to use backing tracks is becoming common but as a strong advocate of live music, I applaud the company for this worthwhile investment. The band sounded terrific and their Entr'acte showcased their abilities.

It was a privilege to see and hear the work of Mark Newport for which The Wedding Singer was his 80th ELODS show. His playing (I liked the 80s electronic keyboard sounds), conducting, teaching and coaching was evident and a huge part of the quality of this production.

Cast

Robbie Hart

Haydn Boxall did much of the heavy lifting in this show as The Wedding Singer, Robbie Hart. He had a wonderful stage voice and his singing was a pleasure to listen to. He delivered Someday, Grow Old with You and If I Told You with a warmth and refinement and then contrasted them with the comedy of Somebody Kill

Me and the excellent Awesome. He was also a good band frontman and gave some cool moves in Single and Saturday Night. Haydn certainly had a big workload with fourteen numbers attributed to him. Robbie's speech at Donatella and Shane's wedding was funny with its gloomy aggression. For If I Told You we heard Haydn's voice blend with Jess's, making a beautiful sound.

The romance between Robbie and Julia is the central plot of this show. Will Julia ditch the awful Glen for the newly found Robbie? I would have liked to have seen more charm in Haydn's portrayal of Robbie. We need to believe that his charisma would sweep Julia off her feet. Robbie was sharp but we could have had more warmth, he was performative when we needed more sensitivity. Perhaps the best scene Robbie had with Julia was in the store when they came across as two ordinary young people doing ordinary things. The educational kiss was terrific and this simple act turned the plot of the show.

Julia Sullivan

Jess Hember's characterisation of Julia was warm, innocent and believable. Jess maintained this character through both her dialogue and singing. Julia is the Cinderella of the show and the audience has to have empathy and care about Julia as she wrestles with decisions between Glen and Robbie. If this isn't played with honesty and integrity, the whole structure of the show falls. It's a big responsibility but one that Jess grasped with style.

Jess has a glorious voice that filled the theatre with power, sensitivity and a country style tone. She sang Someday so well and blended with Haydn on Grow Old with You. Her comic timing made the most of the funny lines such as "Feel" and "back in the dumpster". The dark lyrics in Awesome were quickly improved by Julia resulting in a humorous early scene. Jess's Julia reminded me of Phoebe from Friends for the innocence, comedy and longing for something more.

Early on we saw Julia's desire to be hitched with her capture of the bride's bouquet, but no one was happy that she was casting Glen Gulia in the role as husband. It was as if Julia was keener to be married than to be Glen's wife Julia Gulia. Jess captured an innocence in this part. A victim of circumstance, her own good looks and vulnerable nature. This was a special performance, well done.

Holly

Jemma Hickman gave a fun and joyful performance as Holly that brought this potentially thin character to its full potential. Leading the girls in Pop! Holly certainly made her mark and with a wonderful singing voice that resonated around the theatre.

Jemma was excellent in Saturday Night in the City which was a standout number and her power was evident in Right in Front of Your Eyes as she danced around her four tuxedoed men. I really liked the way Holly worked on bringing Robbie and Julia together, and interrupting the kiss after Not That Kind of Thing was a lovely moment. Holly was the type of friend everyone would want and just what Julia needed. Well done, Jemma.

Sammy

Greg Wedge played the bassist Sammy as the only member wanting to progress the band. He worked well with Robbie and George and the Flock of Seagulls' wig was a masterpiece. Greg showed Sammy's frustrations with the others but in a light and comic way, always finding the laughter moments in the lines and delivering them for all to enjoy. Greg has a great rock voice and he and Jemma performed a cracking duo in Right in Front of Your Eyes. Sammy and Holly's relationship had chemistry, we always knew they would get back together. The dancing between the two of them and the picture of Holly balancing on the chair was iconic, I hope you got a photo. I loved the way Sammy raised his hands with a two-finger salute as he exited off stage.

Greg's ability to work the chair made it perfectly normal and although I respect the reason why there was a note in the programme, in retrospect I don't think it was needed as we were able to easily accept Sammy as a wheelchair user.

George

Archie Beach squeezed all he could from George. His Boy George inspired androgynous, New Romantic look complete with the make-up was good fun. His emotional outbursts were funny and George's Prayer excellent with some impressive vocal gymnastics. Archie had a good pop/rock voice that added to many of the numbers. This was a cartoon style character that brightened the stage.

Grandma Rosie

Corinne Roberts did well with Grandma Rosie, a part that is only there for its comedy. The vibrating bed that 'took her back a bit' and the breakdancing Granny were good scenes. A Note from Grandma was delivered with great timing and phrasing. The keep fit work out scene with studio-ready outfit and Walkman was funny.

I was surprised that the comedic aspect of this part wasn't pushed further as the opportunity for a truly comical female character doesn't come along very often. The way Fiona and Corinne decided to portray Rosie was perfectly fine but perhaps an opportunity to really go for it was lost.

Glen

Mark Tobin did a good job playing the annoyingly nasty Glen Gulia. With white jacket sleeves rolled up, pink shirt, trainer socks, hair moosed and gelled he had the Miami Vice look. Mark played Glen as the arrogant, annoying berk who thought more about 'High, Yield, Debt, Instruments' than he did Julia. His wandering eyes and laddish behaviour showed the narcissist he was. Mark sang and fronted All About the Green well and captured the character sufficiently to contrast with Robbie.

Linda

Full marks to Claudia Lynch for her Linda and landing A Note from Linda and Let me Come Home with great conviction and confidence. Looking drop dead gorgeous Claudia certainly made the right impact for Linda, even making Robbie look nervous and overwhelmed. The Bonnie Tyler effect was funny if slightly scary and Claudia's power ballad voice rocked the theatre. Playing a raunchy part on stage takes courage and Claudia went for it with commitment. Claudia looked totally in control and if the actor looks comfortable then the audience is too. Well done on crafting a highlight of the show.

Angie

Katie Passey did well with her cameo character of Julia's mum Angie. Angie wanted a married daughter and preferably to a rich man. Her mother-of-the-bridezilla was fun and played with great enthusiasm. This was a cartoon type, two-dimensional cameo and played to be appropriately annoying by Katie.

Costumes

Full marks to Sophie Shoults for amassing so many 80s costumes, I can't begin to guess the actual number. I suspect many were adapted or made, charity shop or eBay purchases, taken from the ELODS wardrobe or brought from home. I loved the Fakes' fancy dress, the mutants, Linda's look, Holly's outfits, the blue sparkly jacket for Robbie, the Ramones T-shirt, the I'm with Him T-Shirts and Arnold's jacket, where did that come from?

And then there were the wigs... oh my... hair-raising... how did you all keep straight faces?

Sound and Lighting

There was an excellent lighting design by John Castle with some colour contrasts and pools to highlight different zones around the stage. The orange glows in the bedroom and the greens for the office worked well.

I liked the detail of the pre-show and interval play list being made up of 1980s classics including You Can Call me Al and Sweet Little Lies. The timing of the telephone ring was spot on. There were so many head mics that worked perfectly, it's that old adage that if you don't notice them then all has gone well, but we appreciated the technical expertise and organisation in operating all those mics on the same stage.

Summary

I really enjoyed my first ELODS production and seeing this talented musical theatre team that can sing, dance, act and look good. The Wedding Singer provided the audience with a vivacious and fun evening's entertainment and all the tremendous amount of hard work that went into the production paid dividends. You've set the bar high, we look forward to Guys and Dolls.

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