

**Annie**

**TAOS Musical Theatre & Trowbridge Youth Theatre**

**The Arc 20<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

**Reviewed by Petra Schofield – NODA SW Representative**

**District 10**

Thank you for your warm welcome and hospitality at The Arc and your production of Annie. It is always a pleasure to see productions that reach across the community and the exceptional ticket sales reflected an excellent marketing move for the company and venue which no doubt buoyed the production throughout the week.

This was a solid production, generally well paced with some excellent choreography (Anna Mazan) for the many orphans and company as a whole.

The direction (Matt Heaton) was clear and thoughtful, with good use of the design and the split levels. The comic book theme was well used although the projection felt a little modern against the otherwise faithful design. The projection did provide useful backdrops and narrative, however the functioning comic book on the rostra was lovely touch. I was unaware of Annie as a comic character and found her a strange image; it was a useful historic touch and certainly one that might have been new to audience members.

The organisation of the large company and many orphans was well drilled and all seemed foot sure and confident in their place. The orphans "Team Warbucks" were outstanding and brought a great energy and sparkle to the show. They clearly worked well together and supported each other throughout the show. Their characters were well defined and clear; they were also well costumed and were a real pleasure to watch whenever featured. I can only imagine the chaos of the rehearsal process but it was certainly a very successful result.

The sound was well balanced and managed with the band providing good support without overpowering any of the soloists or company numbers.

Leading the company as Annie (Joely Hudson) was confident and clear. The character was able to lead us through the story and the relationships with the other orphans and adults were well managed and believable.

Oliver Warbucks (Paul Butler) was a good strong performance. Well sung and thoughtful acting, it was a fresh take on the role for me and more reflective than other performances I have seen. It brought a depth and sincerity which was well balanced.

**National Operatic and Dramatic Association**

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Grace Farrell (Leonie Macaslin) a strong performance both singing and acting. The relationship with Warbucks was well developed as was the uncovering of the plan by Miss Hannigan and Rooster to take Annie back. Again there was a nice depth to the character and went beyond the surface which was successful.

Miss Hannigan (Tina Duffin) I would like to have seen a more brash and "tarty" Hannigan, someone to rival Lily in an older way. That said it was a strong performance which kept the story and the Rooster relationship strong. Easy Street was enormous fun as were all the scenes with the knockabout villains.

Rooster Hannigan (Paul West) Rooster is always a good role to get settled into and here again was a strong comic performance well balanced with the others. The role was well sung, the costumes and "disguises" were fun – the audience clearly enjoying the partnerships.

Lily St Regis (Abi Holmes) this was an excellent performance. Capturing the hideous tackiness and lack of style at every point; she was hugely entertaining at all times and the detail in acting and singing emphasised how awful the three of them are.

Franklin D Roosevelt (Mike Holden) this is often a difficult role in the midst of such "larger" characters. However, this was well defined and made a good impact. The relationships with Warbucks and Annie were strong and believable.

There were many good cameo roles in this production and way too numerous to mention. However, the opening section of Act 2 in the Radio Station was excellent. The comedy was fast, witty and very well managed. The individual work of the characters concerned built a visual treat. The Boylan sisters were lovely fun and Jon Lewthwaite as ventriloquist was spot on.

It was lovely to see TAOS Musical Theatre and Trowbridge Youth Theatre working together. The chorus work was a great support to the entire show and ensured it had a strong backbone throughout. TAOS seemed to have a lovely lightness in their stride and the enjoyment of the production crossed the footlights with ease and reflected a very successful performance which was hugely entertaining.

Thank you for the invitation, this was a good night out and I look forward to your next production.

Many Thanks

Petra Schofield

NODA SW – DISTRICT 10

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