

HMS Pinafore – TAOS Musical Theatre

Friday 15 May 2015

Arc Theatre Trowbridge

Petra Schofield – South West NODA representative – District 10

Thank you for your welcome at the Arc and the invitation to review HMS Pinafore.

From the outset this was a very well produced show and credit to the entire team who played a part in it; the costumes were excellent and the set quite outstanding. The well drilled company performed with great commitment and the orchestra were well balanced against the musicians; it was an absolute pleasure to listen to unamplified voices for a change and proof that louder is not always better. Julian Clementson as Musical Director was in good control of the orchestra whilst the company owned everything onstage.

All principals and indeed the whole performance was well directed (Phil Courage) and characterisation was clear throughout; the use of the auditorium for entrances and exits whilst essential was neatly placed into the overall pictures and added to the natural flow of the piece. There was a fine lively vision here and the tableau moments during the musical numbers were well constructed whilst the choreography (Allison Moore) fitted the small space and large company well. It might have been more interesting to use the higher levels of the ships slightly more with the principal's numbers and in particular the sparring duet between Josephine (Caroline Murray) and Ralph (Sean Andrews.) There may well be very sound reasons why this area was not utilised a great deal; it is merely an observation.

Chris Pollock - The RT. Hon. Sir Joseph Porter KCB was a fine upstanding chap; singing well and capturing the style and mannerisms of such a man of station with great aplomb. "When I was a Lad" being a lovely moment in the evening.

Andrew Curtis – Captain Corcoran. A regular principal at the Arc, once again created an enjoyable character. Good vocal, comedy and relationships with the other principals allowed us to follow his story and the eventual resolution.

Sean Andrews - Ralph Rackstraw. This was a strong leading performance, a lovely vocal tone and natural acting ability. The relationship with Josephine developed well and the dashing hero rightly won out in the end.

Caroline Murray – Josephine. This was very well sung, an effortless performance. A feisty heroine with some lovely costumes, the development of the character through both song and dialogue was well established; finding both comedy and colour within what can be often be the most difficult role in G&S – the leading lady.

Pete Grant – Dick Deadeye. Perfect casting for this great comic role with clear strong vocals and you were acting through all moments onstage, not just when featured. This was a highly engaging performance and one that was understandably well received by the audience.

National Operatic and Dramatic Association

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Allison Moore – Little Buttercup. Again a good characterisation both dramatically and vocally; with a clear rapport and relationships with the other company ensured a well rounded performance.

Janet Cooper – Cousin Hebe. A tricky role as she tends to drop in and out of scenes but well managed and performed without getting lost in the bigger company numbers.

Paul West and Iorweth Mitchell – lovely comedy cameos, well sung and created. Strong acting ensured that you were very “watchable” in the company pieces as well as on your own. Good rapport and relationships with each other made this a very engaging pairing.

Company

All company were clearly having a good time and the energy was generally focused and the numbers were well sung and choreography presented with precision and flair. It might well be worth ensuring less experienced members have a clear visual mark to look out to when in company numbers – it would help the focus and engagement of the audience to see everyone’s faces and eyes rather than some feeling little less confident and having an eye line too low for the seats further back to appreciate the story being told. This is a little point but certainly would have helped the chaps in the opening number to have agreed on a point on the back wall to sing to.

It is easy to get used to assuming that TAOS Musical Theatre will always produce a strong show, clearly the teams behind the scenes are a massive part of making that happen and should never go unsung.

An excellent lighting design (Tony Giddings) proved both atmospheric and cheery whilst the combined efforts of director, technical team and company ensured the finale would not have been out of place at the last night of the proms. A great ending to a fine evening’s entertainment.

Many thanks

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