

NORTH ESSEX THEATRE GUILD SHOWCASE FESTIVAL 2019-20

Brantham Amateur Theatrical Society
“Anything Goes” directed by Pippa Revell
Adjudicated by Kate Sheffield assisted by Val Taylor
21/2/2020

FRONT OF HOUSE

This was friendly and helpful but it was not easy in the crush to see who was FOH, and in the interval there was a bigger crush to get refreshments. Given, the limited space available, perhaps an extra performance might have been an option. However, it was great to see a full house for such a popular entertainment.

The programme looked very professional. It was full of information and interesting to read. It took us through the process of seeing how the concept for the show developed into performance. For those unfamiliar with the storyline, the concise outline was useful as the action moves in comparatively short scenes-Cole Porter’s famous score being the cheerful “anchor” of the piece!

SETTING/STAGE MANAGEMENT

This was a solidly constructed set which was full of detail, nicely highlighted when seen as an image reflected in the bar mirror. The attention to detail was excellent; railings, markings on the hull, steps up to the Crow’s Nest etc gave a sense of authenticity and period. The transformation scenes, when cabins/cells were revealed, were very effective. Indeed, an excellent set, which was cleverly designed to work on this stage. Well done!

Stage management was carried out under the supervision of Phil Burns, the pace of the production required slick, efficient changes of set and props. The team moved quietly and unobtrusively to create changes as well-ordered “sailors” would do! Marisol Serrano provided props which suited the period and were well-managed.

LIGHTING AND SOUND

With plenty of cues and colour changes, the team, led by Clinton Bratchell, enhanced the production where scenes, mood and times of day, changed rapidly. The follow spot was used with accuracy and dance routines were enhanced by colour changes. In the second half, the lights seemed rather slow in coming up on the cell (or was it the stage not ready?) but this a minor point!

Sound was well-controlled. The singers were easy to listen to, enhanced by the sound, and cues were well-timed.

MUSIC

John Hoskyns, Russ Harris and Felix Serrano were integral in setting the correct period ambiance and pace of the production. They accompanied the singers without over-powering them, not easy in a small venue! The introduction was lively and the dancers were also supported sympathetically! Well done!

CHOREOGRAPHY

Frankie Swan not only arranged dance movement to suit the period, and various scenes, but ensured the choreography was within the capabilities of those performing. It was performed by all involved with confidence and was a pleasure to watch. Her own performance, with Katie Hinson and Connie Lewis, was also very enjoyable!

COSTUME

What an achievement to dress such a large cast with so many changes and for such a specific, well-documented period. The glitter of the dresses, with the uniforms and D.J's, added glamour whenever needed and helped to create the atmosphere on board ship. The disguises were good and often amusing. There was good contrast to demonstrate status, and detail in the accessories and hairstyles (although Reno's wig seemed a bit "heavy") added to the overall effect of the feel good factor of the show. The organisation in preparing the costumes and getting an overall picture of style and colour was well-achieved.

PERFORMANCES

OLIVER FRASER: had the dashing good looks, and the build, necessary for the part of Billy. We felt he was a little nervous at the beginning of the show, but his confidence grew and he gave a good, steady performance. His songs and dances with Hope Harcourt were particularly enjoyable, although some of the music was too high for him and maybe could have been transposed? Oliver's movement and facial expressions were also very good and we look forward to seeing him on stage again very soon!

ALAN JONES: Performed each of his characters enthusiastically, and gave each one its own identity.

DAVID CHILTON: Elisha was a larger than life figure, both rich and boorish. David portrayed this swaggering, loud mouthed part very well, and with consistency, much to the audiences delight; the scene in his cabin created much hilarity! There were times when David's diction was not clear, maybe due in part to the required American accent, but none the less this was a very enjoyable characterisation.

JAQUIE LEWIS: What a voice! It certainly made the rafters ring! Jaquie looked good and despite seeming slightly subdued at the beginning; this was a sassy portrayal of Reno. "You're the Top" showed off her dancing skills and was both energetic and funny and "Anything Goes" really raised the roof. This was a hugely likeable performance that the audience took to its heart!

DANIEL ESDALE: made each of his parts a clearly defined character and he worked well with the other sailors.

ARJAN VAN HEUVEIN: Yet another performer with a number of different cameo roles to get across to the audience. This he did with confidence.

JESS FORD/LISA BUTLER: Along with the men, each added to the effectiveness of the production by demonstrating clear characters of the period.

ROB WARNE: As a continuous tea drinker, the Captain moved around his ship with ease. On occasion, he seemed a bit too relaxed, losing sense of his position and the period, but Rob was very watchable and certainly had the necessary presence needed.

GEOFF HEWITSON: This was a consistent performance, clearly showing his position as Purser, and always aware of the Captain's authority.

LAURA PITCHELL: This was another part where a character had to be quickly established, and pace of action maintained. This was well achieved by Laura.

MIKE BROWN: His appearance at the beginning, and later in the performance, was consistent. Mike had the right bearing and manner for a “man of the cloth”. A well controlled performance.

TOBY SMITH: Here was another performer whose contribution added to the fabric of the show and supported the action.

FRANKIE SWAN/KATIE HINSON/CONNIE LEWIS: These three ladies looked completely of the 1930’s in dress, manner and movement. They worked well as a team and the dance routine suited them admirably!

TERESA FRASER: created a warm, pleasant personality, albeit a lady of some stature, who showed that she was a dowager of wealth and status. Her voice and movement reflected this convincingly. Teresa also worked well with the delightful dog, and added to the humour when she thought she had lost him.

SOPHIE MERCER: With a pleasant voice, Sophie sang charmingly as Hope and created the requisite feeling of warmth in her facial expressions. She moved well and conveyed her feelings clearly, with changes of mood very ably conveyed in the correct period style. Well done!

JAMES WETHERALL: quickly showed an understanding of the role of Lord Evelyn, in a lively performance. James made the most of the humour provided and ably showed the change from being dull and stuffy to his scene with Reno, which was very amusing. Well done!

MARK HINSON: was consistent in his playing of Moonface. His performance had a good pace and he created a charismatic, small time gangster very well. Mark’s performance was energetic and he had a spirited rapport with Erma. Well done!

NATALIE STOCK: was a lively, smart foil playing Erma opposite Moonface. Natalie timed her responses well, with appropriate variety. A pleasing, energetic performance.

ADULT CHORUS/DANCERS: Everyone was committed and involved throughout, singing, dancing and reacting with enthusiasm. They made a big contribution to the effectiveness of the production.

CHILDREN’S CHORUS: This group of talented youngsters were very good, working well together, and moving in unison-which was well achieved. Facial expressions were good, as was their concentration whenever they appeared. Well done!

PRODUCTION

Pippa Revell’s production was very entertaining. The chorus work was excellent and music levels were just right. There were smooth transitions from scene to scene, and the movement and blocking in the show was good. Maybe it was the development of the slight storyline itself, but I felt there was a lack of variety of pace at times although- as a whole- the production was colourful and moved along well. Period detail had been nicely adhered to and as a showcase for Cole Porter’s wonderful score, BATS clearly demonstrated why the show is still so popular nearly ninety years after its premiere. The audience had a great time!

Best wishes

Kate Sheffield (Adjudicator)