



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Woodley Light Operatic Society
Production : Bad Girls
Date : Friday 17th June 2016
Venue : Kenton Theatre - Henley
Report by : Jeanette Maskell

Show Report

I was really excited to be asked to review Woodley's production of Bad Girls having been an avid follower of the TV series. I was interested to see how the musical would compare and what characters would be included. The script was extremely well written with a great plot; all the favourite characters were involved and all had real depth. Musically there were several powerful and memorable numbers but also some that were unfortunately rather forgettable.

This production had been exceptionally well cast with some super characterisations and fine voices. Although not a show you would advertise as all round family entertainment; it was nonetheless an impressive and compelling piece of theatre.

Emma Wyverne - (Nikki Wade) – I really enjoyed this young lady's performance. She was dynamic, out spoken always in the thick of it, yet there was a real feeling of vulnerability about her. Her character was totally believable and her scenes with Helen poignant and touching. Dialogue had great inflection and was well projected, whilst her singing had a fine timbre. Both her solo "One Moment" and her duet "Every Night" were passionate and captivating. It is a credit to her and Helen that "that kiss" was natural and tender showing no embarrassment.

Samantha Fields – (Yvonne Atkins) – This was an excellent portrayal of the wife of a mobster. She was brash and brassy creating a real gritty and gutsy character. She looked fabulous in her skimpy black leathers and had a real sassy stance which augmented the costume. She had a strong singing voice and this coupled with fresh energetic movement made for a first rate "A List". It was clear that she was popular with the other inmates (well not Shell!) and it was nice to see her caring side as she took Denny under her wing.

Melissa Heaps – (Shell Dockley) – I would like to start by saying how stunning this young lady looked having trimmed down since the last time I saw her. There are not enough superlatives in the dictionary to describe her outstanding performance! Her demeanour, visuals bearing gestures accent dialogue and singing were all of the highest order. As top dog of G-Wing her character was a real nasty piece of work however she had some witty dialogue and managed to bring fun and humour to the role. Her entrapment scene with Jim was fantastic and "First Lady" has to be the highlight of the evening.

Michelle Nelson – (Denny Blood) – This young lady was super as Shell's right hand. She managed to bring out the humanity of the character producing real depth. Her dialogue was meaningful complete with light and shade and good projection. She moved easily around the stage in character, creating a great rapport with Shell and Yvonne. Her duet "Guardian Angel" was sublime and their voices blended exceedingly well with excellent dynamics.

Sarah Watkins – (Crystal Gordon) – As the bible toting religious addict trying to force her beliefs on the other inmates this young lady gave a superb performance. Her dialogue was clear and precise and she integrated easily with her fellow actors, “Freedom Road” was exceptionally proficient and her voice had a soulful quality that was most pleasing to the ear.

Laura Curtis-Dagg – (Rachel Hicks) – This young lady gave a creditable performance as the newest and youngest inmate on G-Wing. She delivered her dialogue with sincerity with all the right inflections; however I would’ve liked a little more projection.

Andrea Adamson – (Julie Saunders)

Jenny Stacey – (Julie Johnston) – What an excellent double act these two were; they worked so well together, moving in tandem, bouncing their dialogue off one another and talking in unison. They made the most of their “Life of Grime” which was great fun; however “All Banged Up” with Yvonne was my favourite. Julie S really came into her own with her “Sorry” number which was superbly put over with pathos and emotion.

Eva Waldren – (Noreen Biggs) – This was a minor character which was adroitly played. She had minimal dialogue and made every line count delivering them with great timing to ensure the comedy was foremost.

Millie Naylor – (Helen Stewart) – I enjoyed this portrayal immensely. She really looked the part and her deportment was superb moving with ease around the acting area. Her dialogue was animated and well projected with perfect stress and emphasis. She forged some great relationships with the other prison staff and her dilemma regarding Nikki came over famously being impassioned moving and ardent. She has a super singing voice and I so enjoyed her duet with Nikki.

Julie Easton - (Sylvia “Bodybag” Hollamby) – This young lady gave a great performance as Fenner’s side kick. She had just the right mix of humour and spitefulness, and her dialogue was animated and well projected. I enjoyed both her numbers with Jim which was tunefully sung in character. At times her movement appeared slightly awkward but this enhanced her performance rather than detracted from.

Lee Anderson – (Jim Fenner) – As the sleazy bully who abuses his position and takes advantage of the women on his wing this chap displayed traits of guile and deceit. He delivered his dialogue; making the most of all the innuendos, with energy expertise and great timing. I personally would have liked him to be even more evil than his portrayal gave us. However his deportment was perfect and he moved effortlessly. He created a first rate rapport with Sylvia and together they had some of the best dialogue in the show. He also had one of the best numbers “The Future is Bright” which had real pizzazz and put over with enthusiasm and flare.

Jasper McGuire – (Justin Mattison) – This young man was terrific as the caring warder. I loved his easy going nature and the way he delivered his dialogue which complemented the character fully. He created great a rapport with the girls and his part in “The Baddest and the Best” was absolutely first rate. His visuals were expressive and animated and his movement fluid and effortless. His crush on Helen was overtly obvious and I really enjoyed their scene in her flat which was amusing and entertaining.

Philip Scott – (The Number One) – This was a fine all round portrayal. He brought a wealth of experience to the role with strong clear dialogue good visuals and natural movement. I so enjoyed his scenes in the toilets with Fenner.

Tony Towers – (Simon Boylan) – As an additional member of the prison staff this young man played his part keenly and avidly. His fine singing voice bolstered the chorus numbers greatly.

Jane Murphy – (Madame Lola)

Gill Scott – (Spike Chester)

Chris Havercan – (Natalie Timpkins)

Jane Wilson – (Gloria Jones)

Pat Willis – (Pearl White) - These five inmates supported the principals with some excellent acting singing and movement. They had been given some good characterisations which they maintained every time they made an appearance.

Karen Bird - (Director) – Huge congratulations must go to this young lady. Her overall vision of the characters plot and staging was unequivocally brilliant. Whilst maintaining the reality of life behind bars and all its going on she guaranteed through the characterisations and impeccable timing that none of the humour was missed and a great pace was maintained. It was a cracking idea to utilise the girls to assist with the scene changes which also helped to keep the action flowing.

Amy Bigham – (Musical Director) – The hard work that this young lady put into this production was clear for all to see. Principals were incredible with great entries timing and diction. She ensured they understood the lyrics so they were able to put the numbers over in character. Voices in all numbers blended perfectly with super projection. She controlled the band with expertise and the balance between stage and pit was spot on.

David Parsonson – (Choreographer) – The choreography was brash saucy and sassy well befitting the plot. The cast had been drilled to perfection and they performed the numbers with great aplomb. The stand out number was “The Future is Bright”.

David Anthony – (Stage Manager) – This SM had his work cut out. However he kept a tight rein on proceedings and all changes were carried out quickly and efficiently. Again this assisted in keeping the pace moving.

Dinrino Theatre Services – (Lighting &Sound) – This was a busy show for lighting and sound. Lighting was atmospheric with a good use of spotting; however I did feel the Nikki’s cell could’ve done with more light in the split scene as Helen’s flat appeared far more in focus. However the lighting for the fire scene was superb, I loved the yellows and oranges it really gave the impression of fiery heat. Sound was well balanced and sound effects were authentic and appropriate to the piece. I liked the voice announcements stating what was happening and the sound of the cell doors closing. Both desks were expertly run adding much to the overall performance.

Big Broad Productions Ltd/Shinfield Players/WLOS – (Costumes/Props) – The girls’ costumes were super and suited their individual personalities, adding colour to the somewhat

grim proceedings. The uniforms were authentic and the black and white costumes for “The Future is Bright” were sublime and really gave the number that wow factor. Props had been well collated and were appropriate for their use and to the plot

Jane Murphy/Jane Wilson - (Wardrobe Mistresses) – These two had done remarkably well in getting the costumes together; they should feel extremely pleased with themselves

Dinrino Theatre Services/KevinGoodfellow/WLOS – (Set) – This was a simple and minimalistic set which served its purpose fully. I liked the cell doors which were really effective, however the bars at the back became obtrusive to the proceedings as they wobbled around like some set from an early soap opera on the telly, every time the door was opened.

Jane Murphy/Jasper McGuire – (Programme) – The programme had been well laid out with all relevant information being clear in a fine legible font; although some of the pictures left something to be desired. However I did like the front cover which was very striking.

Marilyn Hayward – (Front of house) – This young woman had a friendly well-dressed team who were easily identifiable.. I would like to thank her for looking after me so well.

Thank you

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Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13