

Region

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Society : Woodley
Production : Yeomen of the Guard
Date : 2 December 2017
Venue : Oakwood Community Centre
Report by : Judith Watsham

[Show](#)Report

Thank you for inviting me to report on this production as your own Regional Rep, Jeanette Maskell, was not available on this occasion. G & S seems to be performed very rarely these days and it made a very pleasant change to see your show – especially during ‘panto season’. A lovely welcome from your front of house manager too and thank you for the coffee on a rather dank and dismal December afternoon.

You have limited space and facilities at this venue and Jane Murphy, your very competent director, and your set people made the most of it. The set, Keith Boseley and Dinrino Theatre Services, produced a very impressive Tower of London with wallpapered stones and bricks. It was a pity that there were a couple of enormous air bubbles at the top of the White Tower – I assume they did not reveal themselves until the lights were rigged when it was too late to deal with the problem. However, the set was brilliant and made the most use of the limited space. Loved the cat on the parapet incidentally, a lovely touch.

Lighting and Sound, both Dinrino again, were also effective and the small band under MD Patrick Naylor, worked hard without drowning the principals – a very good balance here. However, would it be possible to rig a camera so that the chorus can see the MD? Very few were able to see him and a screen at the back of the auditorium would have prevented one or two from craning their necks at times. Once or twice principals did not stand on their marks – so principals watch this if you want lighting to do their job properly!

Costumes and props were, on the whole, excellent, especially the Yeomen and ladies. However, Sir Richard’s costume seemed to have strayed from the latter half of the seventeenth century to the second quarter of the sixteenth and had Leonard lost his shirt? His doublet did need something at the neck like a ruffled shirt collar.

No credit in the programme for make up so I assume you all did your own? The men’s beards and moustaches all looked great, I assume you grew your own? The one exception was to be seen on Colonel Fairfax’s face on his first appearance; it was, in my opinion, a tad too hairy and he would have had trouble eating I think as it seemed to completely cover his mouth – resulting in slightly muffled dialogue during this scene.

A well-produced and informative programme from Jane Murphy and Jasper McGuire with excellent photographs very well done, it was easy to read in the dark, always a plus!

There were some very good groupings and movements on stage, set I assume by Jane and assistant Claire Rowell. Very well done on choreographing this so successfully.

The ensemble, a company of townsfolk and yeomen, managed their entrances and exits well, especially given the limited space and you sang well in harmony. You also acted and reacted to everything going on around you. Some good characterisations here.

Julie Easton was a delight as Phoebe Meryll and your opening number, *When Maiden Loves* was very well sung. I am full of admiration too for the fact that you learnt to spin for the role. Your acting was first class too. A well rounded and believable performance with some great asides. *Were I Thy Bride* was very well, and mischievously, acted too. Personally, I would have preferred you to have worn lower heeled character shoes if you have them as you seemed to be taller than several of your fellow performers.

Wilfred Shadbolt, Tony Towers, was a good foil for Phoebe and you paired well. Tony gave us a Wilfred hiding a heart underneath a hard shell – very well acted.

I have already mentioned the costume worn by Philip Scott as Sir Richard Cholmondeley but omitted the hat. You wore this pulled down slightly which masked your face sometimes and resulted in a slightly muffled speech.

Chris Wakelin was believable as Jack Point and your diction was excellent particularly in your patter song, every word was clear. You acted well too but I would have liked to see a little more evidence of your deep sorrow at the end with more darkness evident in your voice as the fact that you died of a broken heart was not apparent.

Laura Curtis-Dagg played Elsie Maynard very effectively and you moved and looked like a teenager. You sang well and the quartet, *When a Wooer Goes A Wooing* was delightful.

Jasper McGuire as Colonel Fairfax acted the part well – you sounded too cheerful though when you thought you were about to be executed! We couldn't see your facial expression at this point as it was well concealed by enormous whiskers and beard!

Lee Anderson had to double the small part of Leonard Meryll with that of a Yeoman Warder – it worked and you acted and sang well.

John Bagshaw both looked and sounded so right as Sergeant Meryll and your expression when you realized that you had met your fate in Dame Carruthers and that life for you would never be the same again was priceless.

Gill Scott's Dame Carruthers also looked and sounded right, and I loved the scheming look when you realized you now had the ammunition to get the Sergeant to marry you.

Michelle Nelson, you came into your own as Kate in the quartet *Strange Adventure* which you sang really beautifully – your voice is excellent.

Thank you for giving me a pre-Christmas treat – I love most of the G & S repertoire and never get to see any of them unfortunately. Congratulations on a very good production.

Judith Watsham
Regional Rep NODA London 11 and 11A