

NORTH ESSEX THEATRE GUILD

2015-2016

GROUP *Witham Operatic Workshop (www)*

PRODUCTION *'Our House'*

DIRECTOR *Amy Trigg*

MUSICAL DIRECTOR *Emma Firth*

DATE OF ADJ' *18th February 2015*

ADJUDICATOR *Kerry King accompanied by Sara Green*

Front of House and programme **FOH manager: Debbie Rolph.** **Bar Manger: Ron Howe**
Programme: Rhianna Howard

As always a friendly welcome was received by all patrons with efficient FOH personnel where nothing was too much trouble and welcome refreshments available. We had good seats and an informative programme so this was an excellent beginning to an extremely enjoyable evening.

SET **Graham Green: TEXO scaffolding**
Stage management: David Hunt and Keith Radley
Stage crew: Graham Green, Peter Lawrence,
Michael Anderson, Dean Hirst.

A simple set yet with a great deal of thought going into its design. White flat boards with a brick design and red and blue striped edging, facing the audience. The front flat fronted a flight of steps (the lower board just needed to be a little over to SL as the bottom of the scaffold steps could be seen) which led to a gallery going across the width of the stage. A door was placed either side of mid-stage to denote various locations. There was a screen downstage left situated in the auditorium which was used to great effect for a video of the cast and to advertise future events.

LIGHTING **Nigel Northfield assisted by Quintin Brazier.**
FOLLOW SPOT operators: Kris Knox-Crichton,
Anne Dyster and Lauren Northfield.

Lighting certainly added to the overall visual elements of this show helping to create the feel and energy of various numbers. Back lighting, particularly when there were solo spots would have given a heightened evocative feel especially to the slower vocals. At times some faces were in shadow and in the numbers when there was lots of action it would have been better with lighting being up a little more as there was so much to see. Timing and how lighting helped to create a good visual picture was effective. The placement for the spots and follow spot were excellent and good timing with the follow spot each time it was required. I loved the shadows on the back walls which were effective particularly with the slower numbers. The strobe worked really well giving a good sense of Joe's 'escape' or 'stay' sequence. The lighting for Dad worked well with a hint of colour to indicate he was a 'ghost'. The 'Driving in My Car' number was very effective with moving images in the background.

Well done to the technical team.

SOUND **Paul Galley and Jason Fenn**

The sound was good in terms of quality and volume and was consistent in microphone tone with no noticeable problems.

music

Musical Director: Emma Firth

ORCHESTRA: Piano: **Emma Firth**. Trumpet: **Stephen Hopper**.
Tenor Saxophone/Flute: **Denis Hill**. Tenor Saxophone/clarinet: **Fiona Hill**.
Keyboard: **Geoff Osbourne**. Electric Guitar: **James Stirling**.
Bass guitar/rehearsal pianist: **Ben Firth**. Drums: **Paul Codling**

The orchestra are to be congratulated for a tight and professional sound. Well done to Emma for not only providing the show with an excellent musical director but also as an extremely well accomplished musician. Volume was just right most of the time although there were some moments when it would have been useful to fade a little so that dialogue could be heard. The songs had obviously been well rehearsed as they were executed with energy, light and shade and volume where required. The emotion in some numbers was well captured and contrasted well with some of the up-beat numbers. Some nice harmonies and shades really added to the quality of the songs. Emma and all the musicians involved certainly played a big part in this very enjoyable production.

WARDROBE

**Anne Howe and Alison Carlyle assisted by: Gemma Gray,
Debbie Stirling, Shelley Moore, Lori Trigg.**

The costume team are to be congratulated for ensuring that all costumes depicted the characters being portrayed and providing a continual colourful spectacle that was not only of a good standard and full of variety but suited the mood of each scene. We were very impressed with how many changes of costume there were to denote the passing of time or event and amazed at how this was accomplished considering the number of cast and the little space you had behind the scenes! You had obviously ensured that the Joe 'changes' were as easy as you could make them so that the action was not held up. The diversity of the costumes and the uniformity (such as the grey dresses, prisoners and school uniforms) were extremely well considered and it was very obvious that a great deal of time and thought had gone into costuming this production. You even managed to get a good quality Pluto and Clown costume which again indicates how much you valued a good standard of costume. We loved the red and black theme opening the second act. Well done to you all.

Make-up and hair

Liz Watson assisted by Shelly Moore and Lucy Galley

Make-up and hair had obviously been thought about a lot. Hair styles suited the ages of individuals as did the make-up. Nothing was over-done so again congratulations in ensuring that hair and make-up complemented the costumes and characters.

Properties

MANAGER: Annette Maguire

Team: Angie Briley, Denise Scrivener, Anita Goold, Rachel Maguire

Well done to the properties team for ensuring all the props were right for purpose and where they were supposed to be. Umbrellas are always an 'anxiety' (are they going to open?) but congratulations, everything seemed to do what it was supposed to do!

PERFORMANCES

What was evident in this production was that there were no weak links. Everyone involved acted with focus, commitment and enviable energy. What was contagious was the obvious enjoyment of the whole cast and this could not fail to win over the audience. Just one point that needs to be addressed as far as dialogue is concerned (this particular issue has been noticed on previous productions). There was not an obvious problem with the male actors in this instance but the female actors need to ensure that they project and pronounce words clearly for the dialogue (which IS required even when microphones are used) as there were a few times that the dialogue was neither clear nor heard. As the acting was excellent this was a shame. The lead actors all interacted well with each other ensuring that their relationships such as being romantic, as friends, or mother and son, were absolutely believable. Finally, to witness a big cast full of young persons who all displayed such energy and talent was indeed an absolute joy.

Joe

Ben Huish

This was indeed a commendable performance. Ben's portrayal for each of his 'characters' was both convincing and sincere so that it was incredibly easy to believe the character he was playing. His voice was clear and well projected and his every move natural and believable with attention to detail which added to the strength of his

performance. The changes Ben made for each of the two personalities indicated a mature approach to acting and even if there had been no change of clothes it would have been obvious which 'Joe' he was which indeed reflects Ben's talent. Well done for changing clothes so quickly and efficiently ensuring that the action never faltered. Congratulations for an excellent performance for impressive acting, singing and to add to Ben's talents, dancing!

Sarah

Rosie Goddard

Rosie was convincing as Sarah and showed a good contrast when interacting with each of the 'Joes'. Both singing and dancing were a real pleasure to hear and watch and she conveyed emotion extremely well. It was a shame that some of Rosie's dialogue was missed due to lack of projection. Not only did she look lovely but Rosie's stage presence and acting abilities certainly added to the quality of this show. Well done Rosie.

Kath

Amy Seymour

Amy sang beautifully and playing the role of mum was not an easy thing to do especially trying to carry off a 'working class mum' but she managed to cope with the maturity of the role really well. It was, at times, difficult to hear what was being said and this (as mentioned) is not ensuring that the voice is projected which needs to be addressed even when using a microphone. Amy's portrayal of Kath was believable when interacting with Joe and other characters. Her duet with 'Dad' was delightful.

Dad

Mark Ellis

Mark has an extremely good stage presence and gave a mature performance both in terms of the role he was playing and in his acting ability. His stillness, when required, was excellent as was his interactions with other characters. He gave a sense of authority yet added a feeling of poignancy especially when talking about what he did and should have done. This was an engaging performance added to which his singing voice was a pleasure to listen to and he sang difficult songs with what seemed like apparent ease.

*Emmo
Lewis*

**Jack Martyn
Max Lenoir**

What a pleasure these two were to watch. We cannot separate them in terms of acting ability and how they were totally convincing as two loyal friends. They were funny with a great sense of comic timing and a lovable duo showing their endless talents for us to enjoy and admire. Congratulations to you both

*Billie
Angie*

**Alice Tunningley
Ashton Reed**

Alice was enchanting as Billie and extremely watchable. Great energy and good projection so that everything was heard whether it was singing or dialogue. A really believable character and her amazing stunt-like acrobatics were breath-taking! This was a convincing and enjoyable performance from Alice

Ashton played really well as Billie's friend and was a good foil for Billie's antics so they complemented each other perfectly. She gave a good overall performance, was convincing as Angie and was always focused and nice to watch.

Alice and Ashton worked really well together and had a great sense of comic timing. Well done to both Alice and Ashton for another fun duo.

Mr Pressman

Chris Tierney

Chris gave this role an authentic quality as he was impressive as a successful business man. He gave a mature performance and made sure he looked and as importantly, moved, like the personality he portrayed.

Reecey

Ed Tunningley

Ed was a well-conceived 'nasty' character and he played this role convincingly without going 'over the top' which would have been an easy thing to do. He played this character nicely 'laid back' with a hint of underlying menace. Not only does he have a lovely singing voice but his prowess as a dancer was amazing particularly the acrobatic 'stunts' which he pulled off with Alice. This was indeed an enormous 'trust' sequence and I can only assume that Alice had put her trust and faith (and talent) in the hands of her brother! The communal 'gasp' from the audience reflected just how impressed we all were!

ENSEMBLE

**Aaron Andrews, Emily Birt, Issy Chapman, Jake Collis,
Katie Galley, Hatty Gribben, Jennifer Hunt, Tasha Lawrence,**

**Daisy Martyn, Tom Nicoll, Ben Rolph, Alice Rydzik,
Jodie Sainsbury, Victoria Sharpe, Charlotte Tofts, Bella Tull.**

The ensemble were very impressive, not only with individual performances which were ALL good without exception but for their teamwork, boundless energy, commitment, focus, talent and the enjoyment that they showed which couldn't but help affect the audience because whatever the actors portray on stage in a production will always have an effect on the people watching them.

Congratulations to you all for your valuable and valued input to this WOW production - long may you add your talents to future shows.

CHOREOGRAPHY

Louise Lachance

The musical numbers were extremely well complemented with simple yet effective fun choreography with some complex routines where possible.

There was lots of energy from everyone on stage which was infectious and entertaining and each of the routines was different which added to the enjoyment.

All the numbers were cleverly pitched and well-rehearsed the only exception being the 'Love and Rain' number which seemed a little messy in places. The ending 'Wings of a Dove' was cleverly enacted.

The 'Driving in My Car' number was good fun and really worked with the choreography. The transition of the car to the theme park ride added to the comedy as did the 'Titanic' moment.

The dance between Joe and Sarah portraying a romantic interlude (without being cheesy) was pitched and timed perfectly.

The number including the acrobatics was breath-taking and brought a gasp from every member of the audience!

The finale was one of the best finales we have seen!

Congratulations Louise for such innovative and entertaining choreography.

DIRECTION

Director: Amy Trigg

The acting and singing in this musical production was of a high standard and certainly ensured that the audience would leave the theatre wanting to return and experience another WOW show.

Amy's direction certainly provided an excellent visual experience as well as an extremely entertaining show with a young talented cast that were obviously well directed and rehearsed.

We liked the use of videos of the cast on the screen in the auditorium as the overture was playing. It provided an element of fun whilst listening to the orchestra.

The blocking and balance of how the cast were distributed on stage created a perfect visual picture. Using front of tabs worked well, especially when Dad and Sarah were in good positions and the spots picked them up very effectively.

The entrances and exits were directed and designed in such a way that the flow was non-stop which meant that the pace was excellent and the audience engagement continual.

There were some effective tableaux and good use of freezing actors whilst the main action took place.

Using the cast rather than stage hands to bring on stage furniture is always a positive move to make as it means the action is continuous, the pace is not interrupted and the audience's disbelief remains suspended.

The use of levels added to the visual impact and the sudden 'popping up' of the chorus at different levels was really effective and fun.

Dramatic moments were timed and handled really well.

The energy in the first act was relentless so the contrast in the second act which brought light and shade combined with quiet reflective moments, as the story got darker, worked well.

'It must be love' was well devised and performed, with singing and talking simultaneously without the talking detracting from the singing. That was not an easy task to accomplish so well done.

Congratulations Amy for a production that was of a high standard, with creative and innovative direction.

To coin a phrase that I am sure this group have heard before, WOW - that was a production to be proud of.

Kerry King MA.PGCE.AIIRM

accompanied by Sara Green

February 2015

Please contact me should you have any questions/queries/comments: kerrykingma@yahoo.co.uk