

NORTH ESSEX THEATRE GUILD SHOWCASE FESTIVAL 2017-18

Witham Operatic Workshop

“Cats” directed by Rhianna Howard

Adjudicated by Anne Sexton assisted by Liz Mullen

15/2/18

FRONT OF HOUSE

This team were very helpful and friendly, with those of us in the gallery being assisted by our own F.O.H. helper. Witham Public Hall is a comfortable venue and we had good seats. The programme was well-designed, glossy and informative with great photographs.

SETTING

The setting consisted of a mainly black background dressed with the outlines of buildings, twinkling lights, piles of tyres etc to create the urban world of the cats. There was a platform to enhance the performing area and visual appeal, and an entrance to a sewer hole to add to the pungency of the show’s atmosphere.

LIGHTING & SOUND

The complex and colourful lighting plot enhanced the action on stage and, again, added greatly to the atmosphere of the show and the visual experience of the audience. Eye-catching globes created the sense of city lights below, and the use of follow spots highlighted the performances of individual characters. Sound levels were perfect, you could hear every voice clearly; not always the case when mics are used in local musical theatre. The balance between the singers and the musicians was very good and cues were smoothly executed. Congratulations to the technical team!

COSTUME

Great costumes for these Cats; very individual and eye-catching! Clearly a lot of thought had been given to highlighting the characteristics of each cat in terms of the costumes and wigs. The make-up was sensational; each face was different and beautifully painted! Given the high standard, we did feel that Jennyanydots neon garb didn’t quite work glowing under the U.V. lights, and Mister Mistoffelees’ costume could have done with an “off” switch as we could clearly see his entrance. Otherwise, very well done to all involved!

MUSIC

The band was superbly headed by Susannah Edom; every section, including percussion, was perfectly balanced to provide high quality accompaniment to the singers and to add pace to the production. The standard of singing was very high; polished and confident. The cast seemed to enjoy themselves immensely, the music was a definite WOW!!!!

CHOREOGRAPHY

Under the guidance of Shelly Moore, the movement in the show was varied, graceful and enthusiastically performed. The whole cast moved as one, with lots of animation and feline body language. They were well-rehearsed and confident. The tap dance for “Old Gumbie Cat” was a particular highlight for us! Excellent work everyone!

PERFORMANCES

MUNKUSTRAP: Taking a major role in several numbers, Christopher Tierney had a great singing voice and a strong stage presence. He moved with assurance, making an instant vocal and visual impression.

GRIZABELLA: As the broken and faded glamour cat, Grizabella is shunned. Cerys Wilkin had a powerful voice and she showed vulnerability in her characterisation of this role.

OLD DEUTERONOMY: Showing a maturity that belied his years, we were in no doubt that this was the master cat! Tom Nicoll had a great voice, with a wide range, and a confidence that made quite an impact upon the production!

RUM TUM TUGGER: Tall and striking, this character is a “cool” cat, with lithe movement and swagger. Ben Collins was also a good singer with bags of confidence in this part.

BOMBALURINA: Yasmin Sharp featured in several numbers, demonstrating strong vocals, great movement and animation!

DEMETER: Often paired with Bombalurina, Daisy Greenwood also sang and danced with style and grace.

JELLYORUM: Isobel Pearce had a nice, clear singing voice. Featured in “Gus”, she was sincere and emotional.

VICTORIA: Tasha Gooderham was a lovely dancer; elegant, alluring and enigmatic.

MISTER MISTOFFELEES: Another good dancer, Sophie Hill was stylish, assured and quite magical!

QUAXO: Tall and distinctive, Scott Dingwall supported the company very ably.

JENNYANYDOTS: Featured in several songs, Lily Downes was very energetic and animated.

JEMIMA: Ella used her high pitched, clear singing voice most tellingly when she was accompanying Grizabella in the repeat of “Memory”.

RUMPLETEAZER/MUNGOJERRIE: In their duet as Catburglers, Emily McNeill and Ben Rolph, encapsulated the “crafty geezer” personalities of their characters perfectly. Their combined vocals were exciting to listen to, and their dance moves served to promote their performances as lovable rogues exactly!

ASPARAGUS/GUS: As Gus, the “theatre” cat, Ryan Wuyts was emotional, touching and sincere in his song!

SKIMBLESHANKS: Fraser McLauchlan was very animated in his number with the company.

BUSTOPHER JONES: William Hackett was quite the gentleman in his smart tailcoat. He spoke/sang his number with feeling.

PLATO/MACAVITY: We enjoyed Hattie Phillips mystery cat, especially in the “fight” dance where she demonstrated great energy in her movement.

RUMPUS CAT: Ciaran Brewer was featured in the “Awefull Battle”; he moved well and was totally at ease on the stage.

COMPANY

All the “Cats” had individual names and personalities. This is a very demanding, physical show, and everyone performed with great enthusiasm and commitment to the production. They exuded confidence and showed special team work! Well done everyone!

SUMMARY

As you can tell we greatly enjoyed this very well directed, choreographed and performed show. The opening number was a brilliant start, full of action and movement! The non-stop music, songs and dances never faltered and unfolded with great pace. The standard of this production was very high; you have a talented and committed group!

Many thanks,

Anne Sexton (Adjudicator)