

# **WEST SIDE STORY**

## **Adjudication**

- **West Side Story**
- **WOW**
- **Monday 21st February 2011**
- **Witham Public Hall**

**Adjudicator – Sally Fisher**

**Assisted by – Andrew Hodgson**

**Introduction: We arrived at Witham public hall to a busy front of house due in the main to all tickets being sold for £5.00 on opening night. Needless to say the performance was a sell out, I must say what a fantastic idea to sell the tickets like this for a first night, it must be a tremendous boost to the cast to be greeted by such a large audience. We were given our tickets from a very friendly box office manager and then shown to our seats by another personable member of the team.**

**Before the performance I had time to study the programme, it was well designed and gave the audience a good synopsis of the show together with information about the cast.**

**The set was simply designed but in keeping with the action. I must say that the “Sharks Stink” sign that was left centre stage for the entire show did rather detract from some of the action and should have been removed after the opening.**

**The balcony was rather small and I did feel worried at one point that Tony might topple off but somehow he managed to stay put! One slight niggle was the Humphrey Bogart poster which was a forties classic, perhaps it could have been more relevant to the youth of the 50s advertising a film such as Rebel Without a Cause?**

**All in all though the set worked well on the small stage and I was impressed with the stage crews quick and slick changes.**

**Props - Good attention to detail and in keeping with the era. I particularly liked the “wedding” scene with the dummies which was well thought out with many excellent props.**

**Lighting & Sound - The lighting in general was well done and added to the excitement or pathos of each scene. The lighting on Maria and Tony singing “Somewhere” was particularly poignant. Sound was well balanced and the orchestra blended well with the singing. The head microphones were unobtrusive and did not detract from the action.**

**Costume & Makeup - The costumes had all been well thought out and were very much in the correct style of the era. I like the authenticity of the girls dresses, especially the simplicity of Maria’s compared to Anita’s more gregarious look. The Jets and Sharks were also suitably attired reflecting the mood of both gangs. The wigs I thought were very good, especially Anita’s, very realistic. Make-up was subtle but effective and all looked great.**

## **Cast**

**Tony (Thomas Holland) Thomas commanded the stage without being over the top. He was endearing and immediately you could feel the audience warming to him. He had a lovely tone to his voice and I particularly enjoyed “Something’s Coming” The relationship between Tony and Maria was lovely and we truly believed the love they had for each other. Well done, excellent performance.**

**Maria (Zoe Rogers) Zoe, I could not believe how young you are, yet you were totally believable playing the young Maria. Your voice and vocal skill belied your young age and I became totally swept along with your lovely portrayal. Your innocence and beauty were perfect for the part and your voice was well controlled, beautifully sung with diction clearly audible. Fabulous performance, very well done.**

**Riff (Jake Davis) I enjoyed Jakes performance, he is obviously very much at home on the stage and makes a commanding presence. Be careful not to play out front too much, you need to interact a little more with your fellow performers instead of the audience. Having said that though your performance was assured and well done.**

**Bernardo (Josh Read) I found Josh to be a little inaudible at times and his diction a little unclear. Perhaps you could try to practice projecting your voice a little more to make your self heard. Your character was well thought out and you showed Bernardo's strength of character, particularly in the fight scenes.**

**Anita (Sam Carlyle) Sam played Anita well with a confident rendition of the character. Your singing voice was strong and you exhibited clear diction. I liked your portrayal of Anita and her almost motherly relationship with Maria, especially the way you showed her softer side. Very well done.**

**Chino (Max Clements) Some nice moments particularly when you were getting emotional. Try to project your voice little more so we can hear all your lines.**

**Graziella (Gemma Gray) Velma (Charlotte Watling) A good pairing and some lovely dancing from these two. You both played your parts convincingly and worked well with your dancing partners.**

**Francisca (Tilda Bourne) Rosalia (Faith Rogers) Consuela (Martha Lawless) A convincing trio with particular mention to the show stopping "I feel pretty", which was one of my favourite parts of this show. Convincing acting and strongly danced choreography well done all of you.**

**Anybodies (Stephanie Winch) A difficult part to play for a girl who is struggling to be accepted by the boys and fighting her femininity. Stephanie played the part with lots of energy, made the character likeable and yet gave the audience enough of an insight into the struggles in her life for us to feel empathy with her. Well played.**

**Girl Soloist (Rachel Goddard) A little shaky to begin with but showed some nice qualities. Try to support more in your diaphragm in order to achieve the notes you need.**

**Officer Krupke (Marcus Churchill) A good stooge for Lt Shrank, Marcus played this small, but vital, part well and with good thought to how the character should be played.**

**Doc (Peter Fishwick) I enjoyed the pathos Peter brought to this part. He showed great empathy with the character and built a lovely father figure relationship with Tony.**

**Glad Hand (Luke Merriman) A small cameo part but Luke made an impact from the moment he came on stage. A well thought out and amusing performance.**

**Lt Shrank (James Simpson) James played Shrank with all the necessary authority required for the part. He had good stage presence and I liked his portrayal of the character.**

**The Jets - Action, Big Deal, Baby John, Snowboy, A-rab, Diesel. The Jets performed well as a group and were a believable gang. Special mention should go to Baby John and A-rab played by Elliot Elder and Max Holland who were so watchable and provided some very funny comic moments!**

**The Sharks - Nibbles, Indio, Pepe, Juano, Toro, Moose. Again, a convincing group working well as a team, some good performances, well done!**

**Ensemble/Dancers - Well rehearsed and each number they appeared in was confidently presented.**

**Musical Direction - The musicians, under the careful direction of Susannah Edom, were all well rehearsed and played competently throughout the show. The chorus and soloists all gave commanding performances and the harmonies were particularly good. I did notice some of the boys miming in the Jets song, was this because it was too low for them? All in all a well drilled company and some excellent singing, well done.**

**Choreography – Natalie Wilson’s choreography, although very traditional and true to the original film version of West Side Story, was a triumph. The cast had been drilled to perfection and they all danced effortlessly and confidently. Apparently some of the cast had never danced a step before but thanks to Natalie’s skill and tenacity there did not appear to be a step out of place or an arm in the wrong direction. This show relies very much on the skill of the choreographer and Natalie should be commended for her imagination and attention to detail. Very well done.**

**Direction – Angie Briley helped create a confident and believable set of main characters her direction made them really come to life and drew the audience into the story. I liked the way she included all members of the cast in the main action, it was good to see that all members of the society, no matter what their ability, were given the chance to feel important and very much part of the show. You could tell that the whole cast gelled well together from their energy and obvious love of being on stage, it was very much a team effort for which Angie should be congratulated. She had researched well and had given the cast sound direction. Well done.**

**Conclusion – This was an enjoyable, lively and well sung performance with excellent dancing and choreography. The main characters were believable and belied their young years for which they should be commended. Thank you WOW for a wonderful evening, you certainly live up to your name!**

**With very best wishes  
Sally Fisher – Adjudicator**