

Review by Ron Fosker, Braintree and Witham Times

Cats

WOW

Witham Public Hall

February 12-17

Basing a musical on a set of poems by T S Eliot doesn't sound like an obvious route to success.

But a success Cats was, to such an extent that it broke records both in the West End and on Broadway.

WOW, average age 15, who have an enviable reputation as one of the classiest acts around, brought it to the Witham stage in a highly skilled, alluring and sometimes ravishing production.

From Tasha Gooderham's lithe and willowy ballet dance to Lily Downes' knockabout falling-out-of-a-box routine and from Tom Nicoll's towering vocals to Christopher Tierney's overall command in the central role, the action bursts off the stage.

Cerys Wilkin, in her first WOW appearance, is delightfully gnarly and grouchy as the old despised cat Grizabella and also gets the chance to shine with a heartfelt rendering of Memory – as does 11-year-old Ella Bradley in a memorable performance she is unlikely to forget.

The stage show hides the work that has gone on beforehand. The cast all started with white catsuits and applied the spray paint to produce the feline transformation. And Liz Watson and her team of ten make-up artists then spend 20 to 30 minutes on each cat every night.

Director Rhianna Howard, choreographer Shelley Moore and an excellent band led by Susannah Edom bring it all together.