

LEGALLY BLONDE

TheatreLife Review by Christine Adams Davidson (theatrelife.org)

'Legally Blonde' is an award winning musical with lyrics and music by Neil Benjamin and Laurence O Keefe. The book is by Heather Hatch and adapted from the novel by Amanda Brown. The film starring Reese Witherspoon was produced in 2001.

Elle Woods is the popular young sorority girl who pursues her dreams from the Delta Nu Sorority Houses to the Halls of Justice. A young girl, who usually gets everything she wants, then gets abandoned by her boyfriend Warner who she was expecting to marry. Telling her she is too blonde and will not make a serious wife for a young lawyer, he leaves for Harvard. She decides to follow him hoping to change his mind and win him back. Once at Harvard she tackles stereotypes, scandal and snobbery in pursuit of her dreams.

Hannah Ireland as Elle Woods was the irrepressible heroine of the story who embodied the character with energy and pizzazz as she sang her way through some very difficult numbers, with warmth and ease. Not only looking the part, she gave us a wonderful interpretation and made the role her own. On stage for virtually the whole of the show; she had a fantastic voice, singing effortlessly and keeping her accent throughout; as did all the cast.

Emily Birt as Paulette the bubbly hairdressing friend of Elle was also super. I loved her solo 'Ireland' and the dance with her romantic delivery man Kyle (Ben Rolph).

The two romantic leads for Elle were Tom Nicoll as Warner Huntington III and Fraser McLauchlan as Emmett Forrest. Both portrayed their characters on stage, with maturity and confidence, giving very enjoyable performances.

William Hackett as Professor Callahan gave an outstanding performance. His stature on stage and his clear strong singing voice gave us an incredible character right from the off and it's hard to believe that this young man is only fifteen; he was absolutely excellent. Other impressive performances included Lily Follett as Elle's snobby, bitchy rival Vivienne and Poppy Fisher as Brooke Wyndham. How this young girl sang, skipped and exercised at the same time was simply fantastic.

Great support too from Elle's Greek Chorus and her UCL friends Serena, Pilar and Margot. (Isabella Flynn Haddon, Poppy Taylor and Meg Abbott). The whole cast performed with energy and you could see they were enjoying every moment of their time on stage.

They say never work with children and animals on stage but this is simply not the case with this show as the wonderful dogs Bruiser (Foxy) and Rufus (Copper) were great and loved by the audience.

The choreography for this show was excellent with some wonderful numbers performed. Louise Lachance obviously had worked incredibly hard to get the numbers spot on and each were very impressive. The skipping routine 'Whipped into Shape' was superb as was 'What you want'.

Costumes were very good and the wigs by Patsy Page, as always excellent. The music was supplied by a first-rate orchestra, led by Musical Director, Susannah Edam and was spot on, never overpowering the cast.

There was clever use of simple sets, with the backstage crew working with ease and control; the scene changes were effortless. Experienced director, Nikki Mundell-Poole had obviously worked tirelessly to get this production to the audience and gave us a really feel good show with energy and pace.

You know you are going to see a great show when Nikki is directing.

My only criticism has to be the lighting, there were various issues, including parts of the stage being occasionally left in shadow. Right from the beginning the follow spot was not well placed leaving some of the cast in the dark. I also felt with the various scene changes that the working lights behind the action could have been darker so we didn't see so much of the crew, when moving the props and scenery. Bringing down the blue working lights slightly would have definitely helped.

Congratulations to everyone for this feel good production and to the warmth of the front of house team who always give a great welcome to everyone. It was a pleasure to watch this show and to come out humming the song 'Legally Blonde' at the end. Grab a ticket now and go see this show.