



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Potters Bar Theatre Company
Production : MACK & MABEL
Date : Weds 18th April 2018
Venue : Wyllyotts Theatre
Report by : Michael Monk

Show Report

After a very warm welcome, I walked into the theatre to be greeted with an open set, depicting 'The Sennett Studios'. After hearing, on the grapevine, all the trials and tribulations during your rehearsal period you are to be congratulated on getting this show onto the Wyllyots stage. It is therefore understandable the overall standard of ensemble work was not quite up to the usual high standards we expect from a PBTC musical.

Director – CAMERON BIGGS – You delivered a very good, fast moving production from beginning to end. Well Done.

Ever since its Broadway failure back as far as 1974 and some recent re writes, the continuity of this piece is still in need of pulling apart and re writing. It remains a musical in which the tuneful parts are better than the dramatic whole. The central part of this piece explores the complexities of Mack & Mabel's amorous relationship which I did find was not as believable as it could have been. Possibly due to the disparity of ages of the actors.

At this performance, we could not see the projection through the set during the middle section of 'Make the world laugh' and did not work for the audience.

Musical Direction in the very capable hands of ALLISON PARRIS made this production come to life with some terrific toe tapping tunes. With excellent principal singing, clear diction and some beautiful harmonies coming through from the very large ensemble. The balance between orchestra and stage was on the whole very good, just be careful with the level during the dialogue underscoring sections.

Choreographer – AMANDA LING assisted by DEBRA CONSTANTINO-BELL. As I said earlier in my report about the trials and tribulations this was not PBTC's finest 2.5 hours. It was very noticeable that several ensemble members did not know what they were doing from number to number which did spoil the overall enjoyment of this show.

To get the right effect when using strobe lighting the choreography must be set much faster as the Keystone Cop routine did not work as effectively as it could. However, you cannot fault the enthusiasm and energy everyone gave in each number. A particular highlight of the evening was the high energy 'Tap your troubles away'. Perhaps another few weeks rehearsal on the other numbers would have benefitted the final polish required.

Stage Management – HARRY DONOHUE assisted by members of PBTC. Using Scenic Projects set, all the various scenes moved quickly from one to another with all entrances and exits used effectively.

Lighting – ADAM BOTTOMLEY – was well executed with good area and mood lighting giving the right ambience throughout.

Sound design – PETER DONAGHEY - All on cue and the balance between orchestra pit and performer was executed very well indeed.

The attention to detail for all the props and set dressing from LINDA WILLIAMSON & CHRISTINA TAKKIDES were all good for the period.

Costumes – DRESS CIRCLE & COSTUME STORE – Managed well by JENNY COLLEDGE with BABS PHILPOTT, SARAH BREALEY, GINA STONE and Dresser JULIA ELLIS HALL. However, in the scenes set in the 1911/12 era, there were several 1920's flapper dresses worn which looked wrong. Several of the Police uniforms did not match but it must have been difficult to provide so many with so many cast as Keystone cops. Having said that, on the whole they were bright and colourful against a mainly dark brown set. Hair and makeup (No credit in programme) was good but it was very evident that several men's faces were rather pale and drawn under the stage lights. I know men usually balk at wearing it, but I believe it is necessary and more professional to give a more natural appearance.

Mack Sennett – DERECK CROSS – A 'mature' and very confident performance from this very experienced performer. Great storytelling with the audience which is vital for this role. Fine strong vocals throughout.

Mabel Normand – CHRISTINA LAURIE - Congratulations Christina on what was a fabulous performance from beginning to end. Your stage presence, vocals and versatility were exemplary. Your facial expressions never stopped. Good luck at Mountview!

Lottie – SHARON LOTTARI – What a Trooper for stepping in last minute into this role. High energy and strong personality throughout. Powerful vocals and your enjoyment during 'Tap your Troubled away' was great.

Frank – HAYDN BOXALL – Lovely performance Haydn on what was a good all-round performance from start to finish. Good support for Mabel. Excellent dancing skills, so nice to see another Tapper in the ranks!

Baumann & Kessell – DAVID BOTTOMLEY & GARY COLLEDGE – Excellent 'Little & Large' comedy duo. Interaction with each other's character was great. Your Trio with Mack 'Hit 'em on the Head' was great fun with good movement and timing.

Supporting Characters – Fatty – RICHARD JACKSON, William Desmond Taylor – TOM FIELD, Freddie – DANNY DISS, Ella – ELEANOR JACKSON, Iris – JENNY COLLEDGE, Phyllis – GINA STONE & Andy – GEORGE BANNBISTER. Excellent support in all of your roles. Each of you interacting very well with each other and fellow principals, all adding your own individual humour and characterisations.

Excellent and colourful informative programme compiled by JENNY COLLEDGE.

Thank you once again for your very kind welcome and hospitality.

Best wishes

Michael Monk
Regional Representative
NODA London District 10

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NODA Theatre Summer School 28th July - 4th August at Yarnfield Park, Stone, Staffs,

National AGM and Presidential Gala 22nd September at The Hilton St. Anne's Manor. Bracknell, Berkshire