

NODA REVIEW by Leigh Conley, NODA SW Regional Representative District 8

Any observation made by the reviewer can only be based on what they see at the performance in question. The reviewer may have received information in advance of the performance and it is inevitable that their assessment will be affected by that knowledge. The N.O.D.A. Representative's intention is to give an objective critique of the overall production and in particular the performance viewed. It should be remembered that any review of this nature can only be objective as far as the techniques used during the performance observed. Any criticisms expressed may not have been valid at other performances, and are only made to encourage higher standards in Amateur Theatre. It is hoped that the audience's appreciation of your efforts will have given everyone a lift and encouraged you to greater achievements in the future and that the observations made by the reviewer will prove helpful in improving future productions. As the curtains opened the audience were greeted with their first view of the staging for this production of *Guys and Dolls*. The set was pretty minimalist with illuminated signs hanging above the stage, which could be pulled up or back down depending on the scene. Other scenes were created with the use of a reversible shop front, for *The Mission*, a news stand and a moveable bar, for the Havana scene. This meant that the staging for this production was very simple but looked really good and meant that scene changes were dealt with in a swift and effective way. The lighting and sound, which were presumably hired in from Bright Production Services Ltd, was generally good, although occasionally some sound levels had to be changed mid-song to allow the audience to hear properly.

Most of the costumes and wigs looked really good and definitely worked well for the era the production is set in. All the 'guys' looked great in their gangster outfits and the 'dolls' of the hotbox, also, looked very impressive. Unfortunately, the same attention to detail did not seem to be there on the 'mission' uniforms which didn't look as good, the black lapels particularly looked strange and very fake, it also appeared that some of these uniforms didn't quite fit properly which was a real shame. The make-up by Marie Salter and her team was good and no-one stood out in an unusual way. The choreography by Hannah and Claire Switzer was simple but was incredibly polished and very snappy which gave the whole production a real lift. Stand out moments, again, had to be the choreography of Miss Adelaide and her Hot Box girls (or should that be goils!).

The orchestra under the musical direction of Kathryn Stevens played well and accompanied the singers beautifully, however there were a few occasions where either the singers sound dropped or the orchestra level increased either way this meant, for these few occasions, it was hard to hear the cast singing. Luckily these moments were few and far between.

A big stand out moment in this production was the fun way in which the company dealt with the overture, this can often be a little boring as there is usually not much to watch. However, this production made the overture into an extra scene with a significant amount of the cast (if not all) involved in little scenarios. These were all choreographed to the music and all told fun little stories about the characters that were being portrayed and it seemed all the characters interacted in each other's stories. This was a lovely start to the show and gave the chorus members extra to do. During the show all the chorus were engaged throughout the whole performance and all worked really well together, it was clear that everyone was having fun and, as usual for Glastonbury, there was a great sense of teamwork.

As mentioned the hotbox girls were particularly impressive and very funny. Other chorus members that stood out were Imogen Pearce and Amelia Chinnock-Shuman whose dancing during the Havana scene was very elegant and precise. It wasn't just the 'goils' who were good, as usual, the excellent George Flint was superb in his many roles and yet again showed that he is not only a good chorus member but also a very accomplished background performer never once slipping out of character. All 'the guys' worked very hard as did 'the dolls' and 'the mission' although what a joy it was to see Lee Butt in his roles as Joey Perhaps and as a chorus member. Lee did not stop smiling throughout the whole production and was clearly having a great time.

Paul Townsend must've been thanking his lucky stars when he cast this show. Dean Wilson was charismatic and suitably aloof in his main role as Sky Masterson although Dean didn't quite seem comfortable with the role at first, he soon settled in and produced a very strong performance, winning the hearts of both Sarah Brown and the audience. Sarah was played by Eronwy Selwyn who had a lovely singing voice and sang really well with Dean, she also paired well with Rob Trayhurn who was perfectly cast as Arvide Abernathy and you easily believed that he had fatherly affection for Sarah. Paul Parsons was very charismatic and watchable as Nathan Detroit and, like Dean, effortlessly had the audience behind him, although the age gap between him and Miss Adelaide did seem rather large. Jess Strading as Miss Adelaide was exceptionally good and definitely one of the star performances of the night. Her singing voice was perfect for the role and she kept her accent brilliantly throughout all her songs which she sang with great characterisation, energy and humour, especially 'Sue Me' which was absolutely hilarious.

If Jess was one of the star performers then the other one had to be Liam Frampton as 'Nicely Nicely Johnson', Liam, like Jess, found a lot of humour in his characterisation and brought a lot of heart to his role. His singing voice was lovely as was shown in the number 'Sit Down You're Rocking the Boat' and also in 'Fugue for Tinhorns' which he sang with Joe and Dave, this song was performed just brilliantly, with perfect timing and harmonies throughout and, along with the scenes in the overture, gave the show a fantastic, strong opening. Although I have highlighted only a few of the main principles everyone contributed really well and made this a great show with some fabulous moments.

Huge congratulations to Paul Townsend, Mary Parker and the rest of the team for pulling together a very enjoyable show, and at the end of the day 'More I Cannot Wish You'.