



Society : EBOS
Production : Sweet Charity
Date : 7th November 2009
Venue : Wilde Theatre, Bracknell
Report by : Steve Bold, NODA Representative, Area 14

Report

This was one of the best **Sweet Charity** productions I have seen in a long time. It is an often repeated show on the amateur circuit, some renditions are lacking in a definitive Charity or a weak chorus, but this was certainly not one of those. Director Phaedra Ashford's vision of the show came fully to life on the stage, one cannot commend her enough for the performance she brought from a terrific Charity. Good use was made of such a large stage, the set spread the action over the entire area, meaning they were no underutilised spots or redundant entrances. The use of the high stairs and raised area was excellent throughout, especially during the double Charity sequence as the real one sang and the stand in performed. I'm sure both Director and Choreographer worked closely together and the end result was a show that was appreciated by a large audience, and it was obvious to us all that the cast had enjoyed themselves. Congratulations.

Charity Hope Valentine - Laura Gosden

This was a superb performance - one of the best I have seen. Enthusiasm and energy just exudes from Laura, she fills the stage with her personality and performance. We really fell in love with her vulnerable character. Superb movement at all times, giving us the gauche and self-awareness of her 'innocent character'. This was a brilliant performance and one I will remember for many years to come. Congratulations.

Nicky - Lori Tingay Weber and Helene - Emily Austin

It would be wrong to split these two friends of Charity. They worked well together, they had a wonderful banter, constantly playing off each other and with Charity; I enjoyed their rendering of There's Gotta Be Something Better Than This. Although I felt that Big Spender didn't quite hit the heights that it could have done, it was still a great performance. These two needed to show the hardbitten raunchy women of the world, to contrast with some of Charity's naïve role, and this they achieved. Well done.

Ursula March - Emma Carver

Emma really gave a full on emotional and amusing performance. I very much liked her interpretation of the character; she looked a million dollars when she appeared on stage, and she was certainly 'glitized up' for the role of tempestuous Ursula. She and Vidal worked well opposite each other, her emotional rollercoaster to his more stoic easy going personality. A nice performance.

Herman - James Lole

James is an excellent character actor and he gave a good performance as the 'seedy' club owner, but I felt there wasn't the time for him to really flesh out his character. Although James did well with the script, there was no edge or strong authority and only a marginal change of tone in his voice when he

was berating the girls. Everything seemed a little too casual for my liking. He had a strong singing voice, and this came over well.

Vittorio Vidal - James Atkins

James maintained his romantic character and demeanor throughout. He possesses a good singing voice, and excellent diction alongside a suitable accent. His costume also helped for him to look the part. He gave the character a heart which would 'melt' any young girl's heart. Good performance.

Oscar Linquist - Stuart Hayllor

Stuart always puts his all into his performance. He has a natural talent for the stage, for performing and throwing himself into the character. At times I felt he pushed the envelope of the dysfunctional neurotic Oscar a little further than was strictly necessary, but he displayed all the 'mixed' emotions with suitable gravitas and humility in equal measure. I particularly liked his scene with Charity in the elevator, and the break up scene.

Daddy Brubeck - Duncan Hamilton

A nice cameo role, which was executed very well, although the rendition of Rhythm of Life could have been given a little more gusto. Perhaps a brighter and more colourful costume as well to display himself as the leader of the church rather than just an outlandish preacher.

Dance Hall Hostesses

Carman - Melinda Bennett, Elaine - Helen Hall, Rosie - Kirsty Lloyd, Frenchy - Debbie Mann, Betsy - Franca Megaro, Suzanne - Gillian Albone, Fay - Erin Pharo

The girls were magnificent, everyone of them had a definite character, a different way of coming across to the audience. The dancing was magnificent throughout the ensemble numbers. The costumes were also definitive and created a personality for each of the girls. An excellent performance from everyone made them eminently watchable throughout. It would be churlish of me to pick any one hostess from amongst the group so I will finish with a resounding well done to all and I hope to see you all in larger roles in the future.

Chorus

Areej Abdi, Elaine Adams, Emily-Jane Ashford, Chris Bawden, Tim Bell, Dave Bennett, Frank Box, Becky Burton, Dave Collier, Katie Farrell, Jackie Gadsdon, Ken Gillard, Becky Harrison, Robyn Heffer, Gemma Hicks, Anne Hills, Louise Johnson, Anna McCormack, Natalie Oatham, Brian Read, Sally Rowlandson, Emma Seymour, Jeanette Shore, Ashley Taylor, Suzanne Taylor, Malcolm Winslade

An excellent supporting cast playing a wide range of roles from background characters in the park to the underhand and crooked Charlie clutching Charity's bag as he escapes, from the interesting array of Dance Hall Clientele to the marvelous fairy strutting her stuff across the stage to the look of an incredulous Charity. There were no weak links, everyone looked the part, the costumes all fitted the roles, everyone gave their lines without pause or nerves. Finally, I must mention again congratulations to Anna McCormack for having the guts to wear such an interesting costume and advertisement.

Musical Director - Richard Whennell

The band led by Musical Richard Whennell was superb it would have been worth the entrance fee just to see the band, let alone the performance on the stage as well. They produced some quite stonking and lively performances of the classic score. It is so difficult to get the sound levels right, but this was

a flowing and resolute success from all concerned. Richard had obviously worked and thought very hard on this show, and produced great pace and polished performances - an excellent result.

Choreographer - Gillian Albone

Choreography by Gillian Albone was extremely lively and interesting, especially There's Gotta Be Something Better Than This, a tour de force of choreography and movement utilizing the entire stage. Entrances and exits galore, from every angle and a myriad of girls coming and going as the number built to a marvelous crescendo. One of the best choreographical performances I have seen in a long time.

Director - Phaedra Ashford

The set was minimalist, atmospheric and generally excellent- the changes were slickly handled by the crew, the introduction and use of the elevator was excellent. The lighting was also very well set for the elevator scene and was generally good throughout the show, with good mood changes from scene to scene. The sound and music was excellent, I didn't notice any feedback or missed cues on the songs.

The Vidal bedroom scene was excellent from start to finish, Charity's rendition of If They Could See Me Now, her endeavours to seduce Vittorio, the arrival of Ursula and Charity's expressions in the wardrobe with her cigarette and bottle of beer, the set up of the bed, I had never seen it done quite that way before but it was an excellent touch!!

All the costumes were all spot on with great attention to detail, the dance hall hostesses especially! It was wonderful to see such a consistent attention to detail from the production team. All in all, Phaedra Ashford as the director should be congratulated on an excellent job well done! A cohesive team of seasoned professionals put together an outstanding show, that I doubt I will see a better piece of musical theatre this year. Everyone can be justly proud of themselves, this was an extremely good show! Well done!