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theatre

Society : Cygnet Players
Production : Dirty Rotten Scoundrels
Date : 18th February 2017
Venue : The London Oratory
Report by : Tony Sweeney

Show Report

General

A musical that had recently enjoyed a long West End run bought to the amateur stage by Cygnets who gave us a real West End experience. Strong principals backed up by a talented chorus all worked hard together in a delightful production.

Players -Leading

Jonny Clines (Lawrence) as the leading con man was suave and projected the regal feel essential for his unlikely background as a deposed prince. He moved well and kept in what is a strong character throughout. His rendition of "Love sneaks in" was the musical highlight of the show.

Russell Hughes (Freddy) as the brash American who moves in on Lawrence's operation delivered the character of a more down beat conman well. A strong singer his character was both good and bad in equal measure requiring some strong acting skills to pull it off.

Charlotte Donald (Christine) gave us a strong performance as the leading woman. A superb dancer as well as an excellent singer she was perfect for the part giving it real presence. She coped well with the twist in the plot that really made the show buzz.

Katy Thompson (Muriel) as another American heiress was wonderfully over the top in the role giving us a larger than life figure and someone of the typical rich individual let loose on a European adventure. Her main song "What was a woman to do" summed up the character perfectly.

Russell Bramley (Andre) as a policeman who seemed strangely to be Lawrence's accomplice gave a good supporting performance aided by an excellent French accent. His eventual liaison with Muriel was both comical and moving and he delivered it well.

Rachel Kitchen (Jolene) is a really excellent performer playing a Texan heiress in an authentic accent. She was a real trooper throughout and even the loss of her wig did not put her off her stride and she finished the song without any reaction which was excellent.

Support

A large chorus who sang and danced well gave the show real impact and added great to a strong visual experience.

Director

Damian Sandys clearly loved the show which grew out of a Hollywood film but given new life as an excellent contemporary musical. His use of the space on stage worked well giving the whole thing a real feel good impact.

Musical Director

Kris Rawlinson led a small band who all played well throughout giving real support to the singers and again contributing to an excellent show.

Choreographer

Kim Schenkelaars drilled her dancers well making much of the dance routine both spectacular and well within the capability of the talent available. Hers was an important component in the shows vibrant and energetic feel.

Stage Management

Having a custom built stage makes the stage management slightly easier but with quite a large cast the logistics of entrances and exits needed to be well worked out. Using backdrops helped move the action on at a fair pace essential for such a production.

Sound

The sound was excellent well balanced and audible both in dialogue and in song.

Lighting

The lighting was used well to enhance the mood and helped set the time of day which was excellent.

Make-up

The make up was appropriate with that for the females reflecting both their situations and character well. The slightly over emphasised makeup for Jolene being a good example.

Set Design

Having a very flexible set worked transforming from hotel lobby to bedroom in the blink of an eye. Using backdrops expanded the range of options. Two nicely painted stand up trees also enhanced the feel of the Riviera.

Props

The props were all used well and fitted into the production almost seamlessly.

Costumes

The costumes were not only in period and spectacular but there were a lot of them and backstage costume changes must have been frantic. This aspect never spilled onto the stage and the visual impact they added was vital. Freddy whilst supposedly posing as a sergeant seemed to be dressed in a rather more Naval uniform but this did not affect the illusion.

Programme

The programme was excellent and should be considered as an entry for the 2017 competition. Well laid out and easy to read it acted both to inform the audience and as a great souvenir of the experience.

Front of house

Changes to the entry arrangements for the school could have presented problems but by sending out a very clear map beforehand this did not happen. Those on the door were efficient and welcoming dealing with both the early birds and the latecomers well. I always feel those on the door have a key role in the audience experience and this was very much the case on the day.

Tony Sweeney
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