



Society : Cygnet Players  
Production : 9 to 5 - The Musical  
Date : 9<sup>th</sup> September 2017  
Venue : The Putney Arts Theatre  
Report by : Des Wilby – Regional Representative (District 3)

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## Show Report

May I begin by saying what a pleasure it was to have visited Cygnet Players and to introduce myself as the new NODA Representative for London District Three. Many thanks to Sarah Prescott for her kind invitation, and chat during the interval, and to the ‘front of house’ team for their warm welcome on arrival.

**‘9 to 5: The Musical’** is based on the award-winning 1980 film starring Dolly Parton, Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin. It is the story of three working women who live out their fantasies of getting even with, and eventually overthrowing, the company's "sexist, egotistical, lying, hypocritical bigot" of a boss – Franklin Hart Junior.

This is a difficult show for any society to attempt due to the much loved, and well known, film together with the requirement for three extremely talented principal ladies. A strong ensemble is also vital since this is a high-energy show with continuous movement/dancing and plenty of singing. I was delighted to see Cygnet Players take on this challenge and even happier to have attended what was a truly excellent performance.

Huge congratulations must go to Adam Walker-Galbraith on his musical directing debut and for delivering such a resounding success. The non-stop action, and overall pace, ensured the audience was immediately involved in, and remained enthralled throughout, the entire show. The use of wheeled boxes to create beds, desks and general furniture was fantastic and the action simply flowed with no lengthy set changes or delays. It was obvious that the entire cast had been well drilled and this resulted in a memorable performance. As musical directing debuts go, this was a fantastic achievement and something to look back on with pride.

Congratulations must also be given to Lauren O’Mara who choreographed this show superbly. The overall quality of dancing/movement was excellent with the benchmark being set in the opening number ‘9 to 5’. The audience was left in no doubt as to what to expect for the rest of the show and the cast certainly didn’t disappoint. It was clear to see just how much time, and hard work, had gone into the preparations and wonderful to see a cast truly enjoying themselves.

Whilst there was plenty of room for the cast, Musical Director Sam Fisher was situated at the back of the auditorium with his orchestra. This was a pity but unfortunately there wasn’t sufficient space in the auditorium. Nevertheless, it had no negative impact on the quality, or clarity, of the music which was perfectly in time with all singing. Sam had clearly ensured that the ensemble, and principal vocals, were well rehearsed and that diction was always first rate. I was very impressed by the blending of the band with the vocals and pleased the orchestra never overshadowed the ensemble or principal singing.

The opening scene was pre-set for the audience to see as they entered the auditorium. The stage was sparsely set, with only three beds and simple back cloths, but as the lights went down the beds were quickly filled whilst the orchestra began playing and Dolly Parton's voice introduced the show. As the lights came back up the action began with a rousing version of the title song '9 to 5'. The entire journey from waking up and getting ready to leave the house, travelling to work and then the seamless transformation into an office was quite simply fantastic to watch. The various clocks, which had been hanging on the back cloths, suddenly became very obvious and were a clever piece of set design used throughout the show.

As mentioned earlier, this show demands a very strong trio of ladies and Cygnet Players was extremely fortunate to have such talent available. The principals ensured the show was nothing less than a resounding success. Possessing a wealth of singing and acting experience they were a joy to watch. '9 to 5' was the first test to pass and they did so in style. 'Shine like the Sun' was another huge success as the ladies confronted Franklin Hart and laid bare their true feelings. 'Change It' was a fabulous song and one that began the internal office transformation at Consolidated Industries.

Jamie Miller-Hughes was truly fantastic in the hugely demanding role of Doralee. Not only did Jamie look, and act, the part of a country girl but she sang beautifully and had a terrific Southern accent. From the unwanted attention of her lecherous boss, Franklin Hart, to the 'cold shoulder' treatment received from other women in the office, Doralee eventually achieved her wish of being seen as the woman she really wanted to be in the touching solo 'Backwoods Barbie'. 'Cowgirl's Revenge' provided some unexpected levity with Franklin Hart being roped and eventually held hostage in his own home. Overall Jamie delivered a superb performance and one to look back on with fond memories and great satisfaction.

Kate Chesworth excelled as Violet, the long suffering supervisor who'd been repeatedly passed over for promotion in a male-dominated office environment. Kate's acting and singing were both superb and I particularly enjoyed 'Around Here', where she introduced Judy to Consolidated Industries' lengthy list of high expectations. Kate's rendition of 'One of the Boys', with the male ensemble, was simply great and the duet 'Let Love Grow' another favourite number.

Charlotte Donald was excellent as Judy Bernly, the recently abandoned wife who'd been forced into the workplace, for her very first time, when her husband left her for his young secretary. Shy, timid and slightly awkward to begin with, Charlotte played the role of a woman with no office skills, or self-belief to succeed, exceptionally well. 'I Just Might' was beautifully sung and it was great to watch her character's confidence grow – culminating in a powerful rendition of 'Get Out and Stay Out' where she excelled in rebuffing her ex-husband in no uncertain terms.

Russell Bramley starred as Consolidated Industries' autocratic, and lecherous, boss Franklin Hart and played the role of a truly awful office manager very well indeed. 'Here for You' revealed Hart's feelings for Doralee and overall vile attitude toward the female staff in general. Sung with power and the right amount of arrogance this was an opportunity for Russell to demonstrate his vocal skills and he did not disappoint. Hart finally got what everyone wanted when he was unexpectedly transferred to South America by Tinsworthy – Franklin Hart's boss and Chairman of the Board.

Sarah Grey added a great deal of humour to the show in the role of Roz Keith, Franklin Hart's long-suffering and love-struck assistant. The constant stream of nit-picking office memos, which Violet duly ignored, were a source of amusement – as was her unrequited love for Franklin Hart. Sarah was fabulous throughout and her rendition of 'Heart to Heart' was simply superb.

Freddy Bowen played Joe, the young accountant who had feelings for Violet and wasn't afraid to ask her out. With some good acting throughout, the highlight came when Violet finally revealed she was a "one-man woman" who'd not dated since her husband's death three years earlier. In the touching song 'Let Love Grow' Joe tells Violet that it was time to move on and to take a chance. It was a real shame this was Freddy's only opportunity to demonstrate his excellent vocal skills but a pleasure to see him involved in the ensemble throughout the show.

Alison Walters played the role of Margaret, always on the edge of having had a few too many drinks, and definitely in need of a long-term solution to this problem. Having been sent to 'rehab', as part of the many new office initiatives to support staff, Margaret returned to work a sober and completely new woman.

Will Prescott performed well in the cameo role of Dick, Judy's ex-husband who'd run off with his young secretary only to be 'dumped' and end up crawling back begging forgiveness. Will was then forced to listen as Judy summarily dismissed him in 'Get Out and Stay Out'. Will also performed well in the ensemble and as one of the male dancers in 'One of the Boys'.

Seumas Grey did well in the cameo role of Tinsworthy, Franklin Hart's boss and Chairman of the Board. Only appearing in the final scene Seamus did what everyone wanted to do - rid the office of Franklin Hart once and for all.

The high quality programme, designed by Will Prescott, was packed with lots of information for the audience to enjoy reading. There were some great photographs of rehearsals, interesting cast biographies and nice 'touches' throughout. I especially liked the use of Consolidated Industries name badges for the Creative Team and the Internal Office Memo to introduce cast list and musicians. It was also pleasing to see reference to NODA in the show programme.

Set design was simple but effective. The use of wheeled boxes to create beds, desks and general furniture was an excellent idea that avoided delays and created a constant flow of action. The crew simply mingled with the cast in transforming the stage from one scene to the next in a swift and well-rehearsed fashion. Congratulations to Katy Thompson who, as Stage Manager, ensured everybody, and everything were in the right place at the right time.

Callum Walker-Galbraith had gathered together an impressive array of period looking props which the cast all handled well. Given the number of these, and the speed of set changes, I'm sure keeping track of everything was a huge challenge.

Because of the large cast Phoebe Fleetham and Louise Bravery d'Souza worked together to manage Costumes. It was obvious that they'd spent much time, and effort, ensuring all cast members were appropriately dressed for the time period and office environment. Make-up was handled by individual cast members and again appeared appropriate for the time period and office environment.

Lighting was managed by Richard Pike and was consistently good, throughout the production, with all cast members clearly lit when required. Sound Design & Operation was handled by Stuart Vaughan and assisted by Jo Epps. The sound worked well throughout the production ensuring all speaking and singing was clearly audible.

I would very much have liked to have been able to single out more individual performances but with a large cast, and so much non-stop action, it was difficult to take everything on board as I was enjoying the show so much.

I am sure that the entire audience, like me, left feeling highly impressed with the quality of all cast members and Cygnet Players in general. This truly was an excellent performance, a very enjoyable afternoon's entertainment, and most definitely 'value for money' in anyone's eyes.

I look forward to a long relationship with Cygnet Players and in attending many future performances!

Des Wilby  
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