

Shenfield Operatic Society

Betty Blue Eyes

Director & Choreographer
Musical Director –

Sarah Barton
Rachael Plunkett

Performed at The Queens Theatre, Hornchurch on Friday 9 February 2018 at 7.30pm

Shenfield Operatic has a reputation for very high standards in its productions and this was no exception. The show started well and moved at a good pace.

The cast were, in the main, excellent with some strong characterisations from both Principals and Ensemble. Alli Smith, playing the somewhat downtrodden Gilbert Chilvers, was terrific. Every time I watch him playing a part I see a different personality, such a versatile actor. The part of Joyce Chilvers was played by Director Sarah Burton who had to take the role over at very short notice due to the original actor being taken ill. It is a large part to take on, even with plenty of rehearsal. Sarah had to take over 15 minutes into the first performance and continued to play the role for the whole run. She was excellent, and it is a credit to her capabilities that the audience would not have known if they had not been told in a pre-show announcement.

Mother Dear was played by Kate Smith, a delightful and very funny performance which the audience loved. James Llewellyn-Smith (Dr Swaby) Mick Kiel (Francis Lockwood) and Dave Cormack (Henry Allardyce) made excellent work of their parts as the arrogant local businessmen. Dave Cormack, in particular, was a joy to watch!

Iain Johnson played Inspector Wormald; this is a difficult part to play as he really is the villain of the piece. I felt that Iain's portrayal bordered on being a pantomime villain and I struggled to understand some of his dialogue. The three ladies in the scene with Magic Fingers were all excellent. The remainder of the cast all played their parts well, Shenfield Operatic's members are strong singers and the vocals were a credit to them and to MD Rachael Plunkett.

Caroline Green was the operator of Betty the Pig and I would have liked to see her acting the part as well as operating the puppet. In the main we did not see her facial expressions, which was a pity as it was a great opportunity to bring the puppet to life which didn't quite happen.

Scenery and costumes were hired in and were, as you would expect, of a very high standard. Lighting was good although there was a point when a spot was very late coming in, leaving Joyce Chilvers in a dark spot for a while. I was disappointed with the sound, I frequently comment when a sound engineer fails to bring the mic up on an actor's lines. This happened several times during this production and, as the sound was also hired in from a professional company, I think it is unforgivable not to pick up the cues quickly. It is not as though this was the first performance; this show had been running for at least 2 days, so the sound engineer should have known what they were doing. It is extremely unfair on the cast when the first line of their dialogue is missed by the audience.

Overall, though, a most enjoyable show and one which the audience fully appreciated.

Tessa Davies

This review will be on the NODA Eastern Region Website (<http://www.noda.org.uk/Regions/East>). It will be posted two weeks after it is sent to you. If you need anything amended before it is published, please make sure you let me know quickly. If you would like a photograph published with your review please email a high resolution jpeg to me (noda10@btconnect.com) within two weeks of the performance dates. Make sure you identify the production, the society and the names of people in the photograph.