

Betty Blue Eyes – Shenfield Operatic Society, Queens Theatre, Hornchurch



Shenfield Operatic Society's production of Betty Blue Eyes was a warm-hearted and endearing look at post-austerity Britain and the lengths some folks would go to while rationing was still in place after the war.

The show bubbles along with some great portrayals and a nicely put together orchestra offering some toe-tapping melodies and enjoyable tunes.

The set was lovely and added well to the action and there were some great lighting states and changes which aided the atmosphere.

On occasions, the diction needed to be much better as many lines were missed. By gabbling and bad enunciation. Dialogue still needs to be projected even with a microphone and I was sorry not to hear many soloists particularly in the opening number.

Alli Smith as Gilbert Chilvers the chiropodist has all the gentle charm needed for this part. Playing his wife Joyce at tonight's performance was Sarah Barton (the Director) who had stepped in to cover the role, as I understand it, due to illness. Sarah gave an outstanding performance and led the company with an assured and confidence which contributed to the whole. My hat goes off to her on what was a flawless performance under any circumstances much less stepping into the breach like that.

Dave Cormack as Henry Allardyce was also a strong and particularly enjoyable performance showing his unashamed love for Betty, while James Llewellyn-Smith was a strong and commanding Dr Swaby.

Inspector Wormwold, the meat inspector played by Iain Johnson gave a fine characterisation although sometimes just a little too close to the fine line between pantomime and musicals for my liking.

Kate Smith as Mother Dear almost stole the show with great comedic timing and a real feel for the character. She was only really upstaged by Betty herself expertly handled by Caroline Green who gave her a real personality and lovability.

There were some other notable Performances from Kery Cooke as Mrs Metcalf, the butcher's wife, Joanna Hunt as Veronica Allardyce and Mick Kiel as Francis Lockwood.

I must also commend Louise Byrne, Rachel Watson and Diane Hills who sang Magic Fingers – it was beautifully done and really touched me.

Betty Blue Eyes is a great show with good company work and some nice choreography which I know tonight's audience thoroughly enjoyed. So for a happy evening out, get tickets while you still can.