

Anything Goes

Shenfield Operatic Society

Date

January 2012

Venue

Queens Theatre, Hornchurch

Type of Production

Musical

Producer / Director

Louise Byrne

Musical Director

Adrian Ure

Review

Author: Tessa Davies

I must commend Shenfield Operatic's wardrobe team for their attention to detail in this production. Right from the start it was obvious that they had focused on the accessories to make sure that the excellent costumes were properly finished off. It is a particular bugbear of mine when societies fail to complete the 'look' of their production and, in this case, it was practically faultless.

The performances matched this attention to detail and the ensemble should be complimented on their choral singing and harmonies, it made the show even more enjoyable. Congratulations to MD Adrian Ure for bringing it all together.

The Principals all gave good performances, James Sinclair's dancing was particularly graceful although he seemed to have a few difficulties with the higher notes in some of the songs, he gave a good characterisation of Billy Crocker. Gemma Nye (Reno Sweeney) took a while to show the spirit of her part but, as the show progressed, she became more vivacious.

I loved the performances of Bill Jaycock as Moonface Martin and Rick McGeouch as Lord Evelyn Oakleigh. Both actors showed great comedy talent and timing. Hannah Matthews-Jones was lovely as Hope Harcourt, Maria Coston (Evangeline Harcourt) and David Cormack (Elisha Whitney) produced some memorable comedy moments. Helen Sinclair (Erma) produced a good performance and Ian Scoging and David Ward provided good support in their roles of Captain and Purser respectively.

The scenery changes were a bit slow which did affect the pace of the production; it was a shame that there were so many blackouts, leading to a slightly disjointed feel. Whilst I appreciate that they may have been scripted, I think modern audiences are used to a show flowing with the scene changes being done smoothly but in plain sight. This may not have been possible with the set but, I would recommend trying to reduce the number and length of blackouts to keep the momentum going. Although we only saw stage crew on two occasions, their appearance did 'jar' and maybe dressing them as sailors would have helped.

Another good show from Shenfield Operatic, well done.

Reviewed by Neil Patrick Brentwood Gazette

Little lifts the spirits like the great American songbook and true to form Shenfield Operatic Society offered up a transatlantic treat to mark their 50th anniversary with a stirring interpretation of the Cole Porter classic Anything Goes. The plot follows the sea-faring shenanigans of lovelorn stowaway Billy Crocker; played with nerdy verve by James Sinclair; and his longing for demure debutante Hope Harcourt (Hannah Matthews-Jones).

Seldom in love is anything straight forward, however, as she is reluctantly betrothed to English eccentric lord Evelyn Oakleigh, hammed up to the great effect by the fabulously follicled Rick McGeouch. Perfectly dosed acidic injections were administered by Helen Sinclair as the wickedly waspish Erma and Maria Coston as aloof matriarch Evangeline Harcourte.

Bill Jaycock offered boundless as pastor imposter; the less than infamous public enemy number 13 Moonface Martin, and David Cormack, who was the seminiscent of legendary grouch Walter Mattau as hangdog zillionaire Elisha Whitney. Ian Scoging and David Ward steered a steady course as the captain and purser respectively. Special mention however must go to Gemma Nye as sassy chanteuse Reno Sweeney. A performance of remarkable self-assurance and poise that echoed the sirens of the silver screen.

The choral numbers were strong and stirring, driven along with fervour by musical director Adrian Ure's exceptional orchestra and the cast as a whole performance with a vibrancy that was severely challenged by the frequently long and laboured set changes. Any drop in performance energy could have resulted in a terminal loss of pace and momentum and it was to the cast's eternal credit that this fear was not realised.

A wonderful score, a story simply told and a committed cast ensured a pleasure cruise to live long in the memory.