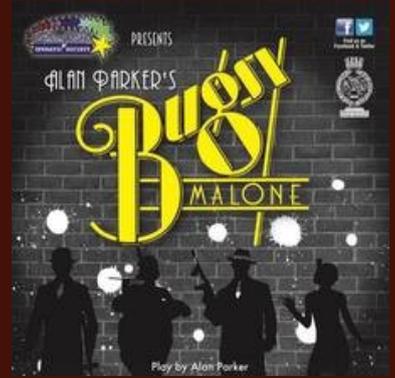


# The Unnamed Critic 27/6/2019

## Bugsy Malone - Shenfield

Most people know Bugsy Malone from the 1976 film where the cast were made up of child actors and consequently when put on, has been the province of schools and drama groups for children.

However Shenfield Operatic Society took on the challenge of doing the show with 'grown ups' and I have to say although I was dubious as to whether this would work, I was pleasantly surprised.



Taking on the lead role of Bugsy Malone was Josh Handley, who played the role with a degree of comedy which worked well. Playing opposite Josh as Blousey Brown, the would-be Hollywood star, was Helen Sinclair. She developed her character throughout the show from rather whiny at the start to harsher but lovable as the show developed. I enjoyed her rendition of 'Ordinary Fools' greatly.

Playing the power couple of Fat Sam and Tallullah were Sean Hynes and Jess Pether. Sean portrayed Sam as loud and rather short tempered which worked well. Jess played Tallullah as haughty and sensual, which was a definite departure from the child versions - her version of 'My Name is Tallulah' started the second act superbly.

The villain of the show is the character of Dandy Dan, but in this production it was Dandy Danielle and was played by Kerry Cooke. She, along with her gang of all female hoodlums, played their parts as cold, harsh killers - some might say they were strong independent woman. This was an interesting twist, felt relevant in today's society and added to the humour when contrasting the 'dumb bum' men of Fat Sam's gang of hoodlums. Talking of the humour, I was glad the slapstick silliness of the original was kept in even if it was in contrast to the grittier feel of the production.

Other named main roles in the programme were Fizzy, played by Joanna Hunt, whose brush sweeping / tap dancing number, 'Tomorrow' was performed expertly by all involved, Bronx Charlie, played by Gemma Lawley, Cagey Joe, played by Robert Phillips and Knuckles, played by Bill Jaycock all of whom played their roles well.

The show has many additional smaller parts which were played by other members of the society - key for the children's version to give everyone a part, but possibly difficult to cover for an adult group. Not that this hindered Shenfield who had multiple people covering multiple roles. Additional parts that deserve a special mention include the police officers who were funny without being too over the top, the dancing girls (all of whom did brilliantly well), and Leroy the not so bright would-be boxer.

Other scenes that stood out for me included the theatre producer and assorted acts, which made me chuckle, the 'Bad Guy's Song' - that poor dog, the splurging of Loony at the end of Act One (the cars looked great) and the scenes around the song 'Down and Out' - Baby Face was very funny.

For a short show, there are actually quite a few musical numbers, all of which sounded good thanks to The Musicians who were presumably in the hidden pit.

The set, apart from for Fat Sam's club, for the most part was minimal which made the stage look a little empty but did mean as an audience you focused on the actors/action. The Fat Sam's club was a complete contrast, bright pink and lit up, which worked well.

There were times especially in the first act when there seemed to be longer than needed pauses and a lack of incidental music (possibly this is how it's written) but it was clear the cast were enjoying themselves, especially in Act Two building up to the splurging of everyone at the end of the show and the audience's enjoyment matched the cast's.

Well done and thank you to the cast, creative team, musicians and crew for an enjoyable evening's entertainment.

It was a shame for them that there were quite a few empty seats, something I hope improves for them as the week progresses.

Shenfield's next production is to be The Producers in February 2020.