



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Reading Operatic Society
Production : Best Little Whorehouse in Texas
Date : Friday 24th April
Venue : Kenton Theatre - Henley
Report by : Jeanette Maskell

Show Report

I was delighted to be invited to review Reading's production of Best Little Whorehouse, it being a favourite of mine.

This was an energetic, lively, sassy and touching production which had been extremely well cast with some outstanding principal and chorus performances.

Oliver Kyte - (Rio Grande Band Leader) – This was a visually animated performance with lithe movement, good accent and great interaction with the audience. Opening the proceedings with the prologue his singing was accomplished with a bright harmonic quality.

Gloria Griffiths – (Miss Wulla Jean) – This was a small cameo role but one that is integral to the plot and was played and sung with professional expertise.

Nicola Morrin – (Angel) – I really enjoyed this feisty performance. Characterisation and accent were excellent with well projected dialogue, good facial expressions and ease of movement. She also put over her telephone conversation with her son in an expressive and moving manner, providing an all-round polished and believable portrayal.

Tamla Birch – (Shy) – How delightful was this young lady? From her first entrance we were struck by her innocence; which she portrayed through her stance, wide eyed, open mouthed gaze and affected movement. She interacted well with her fellow actors, maintained a credible accent with plenty of light and shade, and the transformation during Girl you're a Woman was a revelation.

Charley Woodward – (Jewel) – Here is a young lady with an outstanding singing voice. It was clear why she had been cast in this role; her rendition of Twentyfour hours of Lovin' was powerfully amazing and totally worthy of the rapturous applause she received. However in contrast her solo lines in No Lies were controlled and blended effortlessly with Mona and the girls, never trying to out sing them.

Anna Jennings – (Miss Mona Stangley) – This was the standout performance of the evening. She looked absolutely stunning and her warm, giving character matched this in every way. Her dialogue was tough, empathetic, affectionate and generous to a fault. Her interaction with the girls was motherly, fun and exactly right for the role. The rapport between her and Sheriff Ed Earl was totally believable. Her rich resonant singing voice suited all her numbers but in particular Girl you're a Woman and the wistful Bus from Amarillo.

Jolene Walsh – (Linda Lou)

Ines Gallagher – (Dawn)

Nicky Jagger – (Ginger)

Jane Hardcastle - (Beatrice)

Claire Johnson – (Taddy Jo)

Cherie Emmitt - (Ruby Rae)

Ellie Ulrich – (Eloise)

Amie Jones – (Durla) – I have put these eight girls together as they worked as a team supporting each other in every aspect of their performance. They were audaciously brazen and cheeky providing some fresh and saucy movements in their numbers. Individually each had a three dimensional character; with clear and precise dialogue with light and shade befitting their roles. Their singing was exemplary with excellent harmonies; I particularly enjoyed Hard Candy Christmas which showed the diversity of their characters.

Maz Massey

Bethanie Rutland

Keziah Whittaker

Susannah Williamson

Henry Bearman

Andrew Johnson

Terry Wright – (The Dogettes) - These seven supported Melvin P Thorpe with strong spirited dynamic movement and singing.

Matthew Filmore – (Melvin P Thorpe) – This was a wonderfully over-the-top performance. Singing dialogue and movement were all spot on for the character and he moved around the stage with ease interacting intimately with cast and audience alike. A really well sung Texas has a Whorehouse in it.

Richard Bott – (Sheriff Ed Earl Dodd) – I loved this bumbling characterisation. Ineptitude played a major part in this role, and his dialogue was delivered accordingly. He moved with an awkward striding gait which was absolutely perfect. His rapport with Miss Mona was caring and affectionate though never too slushy. His singing of Good Old Girl was tuneful in character and quite touching.

Liam West – (Scruggs)

Andrew Johnson – (Mayor Rufus Pointdexter)

Andy Camichel – (Edsel Mackay) – These three minor characters portrayed their roles with good well projected pacey dialogue and the synergy between them totally apparent.

Aime Jones – (Doatsey Mae) – This was a highly delightful little role played to perfection, with pleasing dialogue and a plaintively well sung Doatsey Mae

Stuart Neal – (The Governor) – What a fun characterisation! His dialogue was amusingly delivered and his facial expressions were varied and comical. His number The Sidestep was most enjoyable and thoroughly entertaining; even his movement was lively and animated.

Kevin Gingell – (Senator Wingwoah) – This was a fine performance with expertly delivered dialogue, good movement and interaction making for an all-round well delineated character. I admire his bravery during the raid!

Nicky Jagger – (Angelette Imogen Charlene) & **the Angelettes** – Minor characters can sometimes get lost in the greater scheme of things; however not on this occasion. As leader of the Angelettes she gave a spirited performance with dynamic movement and

prodigious singing. The other girls followed her lead and acquitted themselves admirably; singing and dancing with great aplomb.

Henry Bearman
Stuart Brookfield
Craig Duffield
Andrew Johnson
Oliver Kyte
Matthew Snape
Liam West

Terry Wright – (The Aggies) – These eight lads were outrageously brilliant. Their characters were priceless, and they worked as a tight knit unit, bouncing dialogue off one another. Boy oh boy could they move! The Aggie Song was an absolute show stopper with energetic dance moves and crisp clear singing. I was amazed that after all that dancing they were not in need of oxygen, but managed to finish with yet another burst of rousing chorus. Well done you guys, you really deserved that ovation!

Chorus – Throughout the differing scenes they portrayed various characters supporting the principals with understanding, yet shining in their own right. Entrances and exits were well contrived and appeared seamless. They sang well with great harmonies containing considerable amounts of light and shade.

Alexander McWilliam – (Director) – This was an incredible piece of theatre. Every aspect of the performance had been meticulously thought through, from characterisations to staging. Having been well cast with no weak links the characters were developed with emphasis on accent dialogue and behavioural patterns. It had pace and creativity ensuring the piece moved along with no pregnant pauses. The pace of the piece was helped by the way the performance had been staged; adding items of furniture etc. to a bare stage creating the effect of the various scenes they were depicting, and this really worked. Blocking was expertly managed with no upstaging and great spatial awareness. There were some excellent little touches throughout and I particularly enjoyed the way the raid had been directed.

Nick Austin – (Musical Director) – Principals and chorus alike had been skilfully and adroitly directed; he ensured they were confident and decisive with entrances in all numbers. He had instilled in them the need for clear diction and this proved its worth as every word was audible. The balance between stage and pit was perfect with the band being well controlled.

David Parsonson/Maz Massey – (Choreography) – This was some of the most original choreography I have seen in a long while. It was imaginative, provocative and highly artistic. They had drilled the cast to perfection with every member in perfect step with the others. Not only this they had ensured everyone in the cast enjoyed what they were doing; creating a contagious energy that spilled into the audience.

David Parsonson – (Production Manager) – David managed to co-ordinate a first rate production bringing all aspects of the performance together in style.

Carol Hodgkinson – (Stage Manager) assisted by **Chris Dinsey** – **DSM & Crew** – This was a well-managed stage with all changes being carried out quickly quietly and efficiently.

Kim Hollamby – (Lighting Design) – I have now seen several performances for which Kim has been responsible for lighting and have to say he always manages to create the right effect for the show he is lighting. This was no exception! All cues were picked up efficiently by **Louis Martin** who was operating the board and there was excellent use of follow spot operated by **Joe Wilson**.

Chris Dinsey – (Sound Design) – Sound was well controlled by **Ashley Hillier** on the desk with no missed cues. The overall design was excellent with great balance between characters; and the gun shot was absolutely perfect, it really could've been fired from the barrel!

Dylan Dambella/Laura Adams – (Make-up) – This had been well applied befitting the characters; though I would've like a little more red lipstick on some of the girls.

Hayley Williams – (Hair & Wigs) – Having seen a production the previous week where this young lady had been in charge of hair I knew we would have styles that were perfect for the characters; and they were! However I'm not sure that Jewel's hairstyle was not a little too modern.

Jessica Costello/Jessica Gough – (Properties) – These had been well collated being in period and keeping with the piece.

Yvonne Maynard – (Costumes) – How colourful did these costumes make the stage look? The girls' costumes were in keeping with their characters being slightly provocative yet perfectly decent, the sheriff's uniform, Aggies uniforms and cowboy shirts; all perfect for the period.

Yvonne Maynard/Andrew Higgs/Brian Veale – (Programme Design and Content) – This was a small but well-designed programme containing all the information required for this production and future shows to be performed by the society.

Thank you so much for such an enjoyable evening's entertainment!

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Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13