



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Reading Operatic Society
Production : Closing Time
Date : Friday 26th April 2019
Venue : The Oakwood Centre Woodley
Report by : Jeanette Maskell

[Show Report](#)

This society continues its resurgence; with a strong core membership that displayed oodles of talent and enthusiasm in this review written by Ben Hudell.

It was nice to see several new members which shows the society is heading in the right direction.

The story worked well and had all your typical pub goers; the lonely seeking company, the bar sitters, the lads on a jolly, the ever so slightly drunk who got a bit lairy and the obligatory hen party. There was good conversational dialogue that contained both humour and pathos.

It was great to see a full house and I hope that the rest of the run also sold out

You've Got a Friend in Me – Chris Reddington – What a lovely way to open the show. As the barman Chris was ideal; he had an amiable and convivial personality and interacted with the cast and the audience freely and effectively. He has a pleasant singing voice and his rendition of 'You've Got a Friend' was honest and sincere.

Waving through a Window – Angie Garland/Ensemble I felt this song was out of this young lady's vocal range. There were times when she came across fabulously however this was intermittent and in those times we were unable to hear what she was singing. The chorus were super and came over famously.

Anything Goes – Ray Higgs/Samantha Prior – Whilst I enjoyed this number I felt it lacked energy. Samantha remember diction is really important and unfortunately I did not understand a word you were singing even though I know the number inside out! I'm not sure if this was nerves as your solo in 'Hello' was perfectly audible. Ray sang effortlessly and his voice was easy on the ear.

I Want to Break Free – Tanya Watts – This young lady gave a powerful rendition of this classic number; she really meant every word!

Popular – Jennie Dick/Josie Worgan – I liked this number a lot; it was light hearted and zingy with Jennie and Josie being fresh and pert. Their visuals were expressive and alive and they bounced off each other brilliantly.

With You – Laura Purser – This was an impassioned rendition by Laura who has a delightfully tuneful and lyrical voice. She had great diction and her lyrics were well intoned with visuals that were pensive and expressive.

Hello – George Apap/Delun Jones/Samantha Prior/Katie Smith/Ben Tait/James Treherne/Tanya Watts – Oh my word! This number was sensational. The singers had clear precise diction which was so vital for this song; and they were all vivid animated and energetic. It was terrific fun and the audience enjoyed it immensely laughing out loud at the lyrics and the antics of the singer.

Look to the Rainbow – Gloria Griffiths – As a seasoned performer Gloria made a cameo entrance in order to sing this number. It was extremely well received by the audience who whooped and hollered at the end.

I Have Confidence – Beth Rutland – This young lady was joyous! I really enjoyed her rendition of this number; she had warmth that was palpable and packed it with true emotion and feeling. A very watchable and enjoyable performance!

Agony – Ben Hudell/Ben Tait – I felt the humour was missed in this rendition. It was extremely well sung by the Bens' who turned it into a stirring ballad without the rivalry generally associated with the number.

Gimme! Gimme! Gimme! – Charley Woodward/Ensemble – Charley brought bags of fun to this number and encouraged the ensemble to do the same. The choreography reflected the number and Nicky had created a lively fun and entertaining routine.

Dead Ringer For Love – James Treherne/Tanya Watts/Ensemble – Meat Loaf, James isn't! However he put his own stamp on this iconic number; it was powerful dynamic and rugged. Tanya has an attractive mellow voice which suited this number perfectly. The ensemble sang well backing the principals brilliantly

Sit Down You're Rocking the Boat – Ben Hudell/Delun Jones/Ensemble - I thought the choreography for this number was fantastic. The cast were compact tight and uniform and their singing clear and vigorous. Ben brought out the humour of the lyrics giving a lively rendition enhanced by his effortless tenor voice.

Beggin' – Ben Tait/Ben Hudell/Chris Reddington/James Treherne – These four lads were great; they had completely contrasting characters and voices yet complemented each other famously. They all moved well which added to the number greatly.

Can You Feel the Love Tonight? – Emma Keeley/Natasha Maxworthy/Katie Smith – What a delightfully simplistic rendition this trio gave us. Their voices were clear and true and blended fabulously which enhanced the overall performance brilliantly.

It's Quiet Uptown – George Apap/Gemma Didcock/Ensemble – This number was absolutely stunning! The soloists sang with passion and poignancy. Gemma's voice suited this number immensely being rich rounded and soulful. The ensemble backed them brilliantly with strong emotion fantastic harmonies and superb dynamics. For me it was the highlight of the evening and truly moved me.

Hit me with Your Best Shot – Delun Jones/Ensemble – This young lady was superb; her fiery personality suited this number perfectly and she gave a powerful and meaningful rendition. I would like to say that as a dancer I found her irresistible and a joy to watch.

I Can Cook Too – Charley Woodward – Charley has everything; great voice expressive animated features and a lot of sass. This she used to great effect in this number and had the audience eating out of her hand.

Drink With Me – Ray Higgs/Ensemble – This was simplistically and poignantly sung by Ray; who had the ideal timbre of voice for this number. He sang to the audience who were most appreciative.

Shine a Light – Samantha Prior/Chris Reddington/Charley Woodward/Ensemble - I enjoyed this number immensely; it was lively animated. The soloists and the ensemble had impeccable diction which is so vital for a song with such wordy lyrics.

Closing Time – Chris Reddington/Ensemble – What a fitting way to end the show! Chris connected with the cast and the audience giving a rounded and polished performance

David Parsonson – (Production Manager) – I should think David could perform this role with his eyes shut. He really does have a forte in this field and he ensured the whole production ran smoothly from start to finish.

Ben Hudell - (Story/Librettist) – Ben has a natural talent for writing fluent conversational dialogue. The storyline he had created worked well and the differing characters brought the story to life.

Nicky Jagger – (Director/Choreographer) – With the cast playing themselves but with their own specific story Nicky did a super job in getting the cast to connect effortlessly with one another and bring out the emotions of those stories. Her staging was great with excellent groupings and spacing; and her overall direction created pace energy and drama. I liked the way she used the entrances to send cast outside, to the loo or pool room thereby clearing the stage for the more intimate dialogue and numbers. I especially liked the way she had the cast freeze at the end of act 1 and then start act 2 in the same freeze; very clever. From my experience the only thing that did not ring true was the way the youngsters cleared the tables at the end of the evening!

Her choreography was diverse with some simple effective moves that all the cast could perform and then there was more intricate routines that those real dancers executed with aplomb and gusto. The cast had been well drilled and performed all the routines with spirit and enthusiasm. Most of all I was impressed by the way Nicky had gotten each and every member of the cast to smile and enjoy what they were doing!

Pippa Eden – (Musical Director) – This young lady had done a fantastic job with all the company numbers. Her emphatic direction reaped its rewards with some outstanding tempos dynamics and harmonies. Duets trios' quartets and other small group numbers had also been perfectly managed so voices blended seamlessly and were unequivocally balanced. She directed the cast from the balcony and the balance between them was first rate. All in all she should be immensely pleased of what she achieved

James Cook – (Stage Manager) – ASMs **Chris Dinsey/Terry Hodgkinson** and crew **Rhiannon Rowlands** having a static set meant there was not really a lot for this team to do. However it is imperative to have someone on hand should anything untoward occur. I was a tad concerned for the window flat that had been suspended from the rafters it didn't look to stable; but stayed put throughout so guess the SM really did know what he was doing

Nicky Jagger/James Treherne – (Set Design) – I so liked this set which had been extremely well built by the Master Carpenter - **James Treherne**. The working pub door was great; what a shame it stuck, hopefully this was remedied for the rest of the run. Using the stage door as an exit to the cellar, toilets and pool room was inspired and gave added depth and authenticity to the set. The bar and the window flat were excellent and looked ideal for the setting.

Kim Hollamby – (Lighting Design) – There was a great use of varied colours that enhanced the action brilliantly. The spots added atmosphere and created depth all of which was skilfully operated by **Louis Martin**

Louis Martin – (Sound Design) – Sound unfortunately was a little hit and miss! The stage mics did their job famously; as did the personal mics expertly operated by **Lucas Warner**

Jessica Costello/Emily Hawkes – (Properties) – This pair had done an absolutely fantastic job in dressing the set. The bar which had been well stocked with optics trays and glasses; the flowerpots on the window ledge the pictures on the wall and the signs for the toilets and pool room, all appropriate and ideal for the usage.

Pam Dennis – (Makeup/Hair) – Makeup stood up under the lighting with a well applied uniform base and splendidly defined eyes and lips.

Charley Woodward – (Costumes) – Being a modern day piece I would guess that the members chose what they would like to wear; with Charley co-ordinating the overall look. However there was the barman's apron and James' leather jacket that had to be sourced (or is he a biker?).

Kim Hollamby – (Programme) – This was a simple yet effective programme that was well laid out on good quality paper. The white writing on black paper coupled with a good size legible font makes for easy reading. The photos by **Brian Burden** were clear and sharp and enhanced the overall look.

Barrie Theobald – (Front of House Manager) – As I have come to expect from Barrie he had the front of house team looking out for the audience and ensuring everything ran smoothly. I would like to thank him for looking after me so well.

Thank you

Jet

Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13