



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Reading Operatic Society  
Production : Godspell  
Date : Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2019  
Venue : Kenton Theatre - Henley  
Report by : Jeanette Maskell

## Show Report

This society continues to grow and is clearly doing something right! They have new members coming in and old members returning. They really do deserve much success.

Godspell is one of my all time favourite shows and holds fond memories from a time when I performed in it. I did miss the "Tower of Babel" as a prologue but really enjoyed "Beautiful City" taken from the film.

This group of actors worked famously as a team playing their parts well with some superlative singing; however I felt they had not fully grasped the concept of the piece, and this in turn impacted on their acting and portrayal of the parables.

**Ajani Cabey** – (Jesus) – This young man did a sterling job as Jesus. He has a fine singing voice which suited all his numbers no end. However for me I particularly enjoyed "All for the Best" and "Beautiful City". He was totally laid back and easy going (at times; for me a little too laid back) and this communicated well with the audience. His dialogue was well delivered though I would have liked a tad more light and shade. He interacted well with the rest of the cast especially Judas which was when he found some real emotion. This continued into the finale and he ended on a high.

**Chris Reddington** – (John the Baptist/Judas) – For me this was the stand out performance of the evening. He displayed true emotion and passion. Starting proceedings from the back of the auditorium with a well sung "Prepare Ye". His John the Baptist was questioning demanding and completely devoted to Jesus. His dialogue was powerfully energetic with great inflection. He has naturally agile and lithe movement which really came to the fore in a fun rendition of "All for the Best"; for me a highlight of the evening. As Judas he was angry confused and guilt ridden; which was conveyed through compelling vigorous and impassioned dialogue. I really enjoyed "On the Willows" which was passionate and vital.

**Saira Bentley-Holder** – This young lady gave a sassy performance with good visuals and vocals. Her rendition of 'Bless the Lord' was upbeat and rousing.

**Richard Bott** – I so enjoyed this young man's performance; he brought a great deal of fun and humour to his character. Although he struggled somewhat in his top register "All Good Gifts" was nonetheless tunefully sung with good light and shade.

**Stanley Hagen** – From looking at this young man's photo in the programme I thought him to be about 12! However tucked up in his woolly hat, he did look slightly older on stage! He is a great talent and the group is lucky to have found him. He is an accomplished musician and

his dexterity on Trumpet, Ukulele. Electric Guitar and Piano was most pleasing. “We Beseech Thee” was confidently sung and he skilfully avoided the top note.

**Amie Jones** – A lot of the dialogue fell to this young lady and for the most part it was clear and articulate. However there were occasions when the use of an accent impeded the dialogue and it became difficult to understand what she was saying. She moves extremely well and this enhanced her rendition of “Turn back, O Man” immensely. She had delightfully animated visuals and her interaction with the audience was superb.

**Eve MacDonald** – “By My Side” was an absolute delight! This young lady has a rich mellow voice perfect for this number. She sang with poignancy and emotion with super dynamics. I really enjoyed the signing which befitted the lyrics perfectly. The whole number was simple yet effective. Her dialogue was also delivered in this manner.

**Katie Smith** – This young lady was a joy! Her dialogue and singing were of the highest order and most charismatic. “Day by Day” was expressive, stirring and touching.

**Charley Woodward** – As I have come to expect from this actress; she was extrovert and energetic. “Learn your Lessons Well” had depth and power and was sung with vivacity and vigour.

**Josie Worgan** – “Light of the World” was this young lady’s contribution to the proceedings and she put it over with spirit and alacrity.

**Charley Caswell**

**Catherine Hood**

**Emma Keeley** – These three added to the overall performance supporting the principals with gusto and enthusiasm.

**Andy Camichel** – (Director) – Andy had a clear vision of what he wanted the audience to see and this he achieved. There were bits I really enjoyed and there were bits that I was not so keen on. I am not a fan of audience participation (other than in pantomime) and I felt on this occasion it slowed the action down and the running became disjointed. That said the cast and audience absolutely loved it and had a great time! The baptism was imaginative and worked really well and this scene had good pace and energy. I would have liked the cast to have had more childlike qualities; however they were having the time of their lives and the energy and enthusiasm they displayed transferred to the audience brilliantly. His structure staging and blocking was excellent and I really liked the way he used the ladders and upper level. The opening of Act 2 was great being played on a gold ruche curtain which looked super. I would; however, have liked a more realistic representation of a cross. Unfortunately to my mind it looked for all the world as though Jesus was being electrocuted.

**Bridget Biggar** – (Musical Director) – This MD had done an absolutely magnificent job! She ensured every member of the cast was confident in their entries and timing. The harmonies and dynamics were exquisite and overall she made certain they produced the most pleasing sound. Bridget is to be congratulated on the balance she achieved between the excellent band and the performers.

**Delun Jones** – (Choreographer) – Delun had created some simplistic yet effective routines which befitted the ambiance perfectly. She excelled with “All for the Best” which was the highlight of the evening. She had expertly drilled the cast so every member was able to perform the routines effortlessly.

**David Parsonson** – (Production Manager) – Once again David excelled in this role. His unerring commitment to the production is commendable and ensures everything runs smoothly from start to finish

**Carol Hodgkinson** – (Stage Manager) – **Chris Dinsey/James Cook** – (ASMs) Although there was a static set and no changes other than the pulling of the proscenium curtain and the ruche curtain being dropped in and out there is always a need for an experienced SM. Carol fitted this bill perfectly and ensured the wings were clear for the casts entrances and exits.

**Terry Hodgkinson** – (Head Flyman/Stage Crew) – With the three canvasses and a ruche curtain flying in it was imperative that there was a skilled flyman to oversee the drops. This job fell to Terry who carried out his duties with proficiency and competence.

**Michael Brenkley** – (Lighting Design) – This was an imaginative and atmospheric design that created the right effect at the right time and enhanced the action brilliantly. It is a challenge to light an area so high up; however this technician managed to do this and the last supper was clear and effective. In complete contrast and one I particularly liked was the silhouette effect achieved when Jesus was on the upper level delivering the Garden of Gethsemane speech. I liked the variety of colours used and of course the flashes of red depicting the more sinister occasions. All this was expertly operated by **Michael Brenkley/Andy Camichel**

**Pippa Eden/Lucas Warner** – (Follow Spot Operators) – I so like a follow spot; it creates depth and atmosphere. This pair operated the spots with expertise and they can rest assured that their efforts enhance the action brilliantly.

**Louis Martin** – (Sound Design/Operation) – I was most impressed with the sound. Every member could be heard perfectly and their mics were cued to perfection.

**Sienna Eden/Jo Hunt** – (Properties) – This pair certainly had their work cut out! There were confetti cannons, water pistols, balloons filled with glitter and clipboards with dialogue on for the audience participants.

**Andy Camichel** – (Scenic Design) – I really liked this design. I liked the ladders, the fencing which hid the band, and the upper level. It gave the director several levels of dimension and the cast scope to play with their surroundings

**Terry Wright** – (Production Carpenter) – I do apologise; but I am struggling to think what Terry could have made. I can only think that he made the flown struts that supported the canvass hangings?

**Pam Dennis** – (Makeup/Hair) – This was as unique as their characters. It had been well applied with a good base and well defined features. I would assume the cast chose how they

wanted to wear their hair as each had a style that they felt comfortable and suited them perfectly.

**Members of the Society/Shinfield Players Theatre – (Costumes)** – I liked the fact that the predominant colour white made the costumes uniform whilst being individual allowing the cast to bring their personalities through. Having Judas in denims made him unique and stand out as befitted the character. The cloaks used for the Pharisees were fitting for the use and I also liked their sunglasses.

**Nicky Jagger – (Signing Tutor)** – Nicky had done a great job in teaching the cast to sign for “By my Side”. It suited the song famously.

**Nicky Jagger – (Front of House Manager)** – It was lovely to catch up with Nicky who was doing a super job front of house with her team.

**Programme** – The programme designed by **Kim Hollamby** and edited by **Jennie Dick** was clear colourful and informative. I really liked the centre page with the silhouettes stretching up to rehearsal photos by **Rhi O’Keefe**. The cast bios were enhanced with crisp clear photos by **Brian Burden**

Thank you

**Jet**

Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13