

## **ANYTHING GOES CAODS at the Civic Theatre 02.03.17**

Forget the feeble plot and the cardboard characters. It's those classic Cole Porter evergreens that keep us coming back to the decks of the SS American. Ray Jeffery's colourful production fills the Civic stage with a credible cruise-ship demographic – a lovely sequence of tableau vignettes for the Overture – while up on the bridge the band [MD Bryan Cass] plays on, oblivious to the shipboard shenanigans going on below. Some excellent casting for the comedy character roles: Kieran Bacon a charming, cheerful hoodlum, with Jill Gordon as his moll, Kevin Abrey a terrific upper-class twit – monocle and plus-fours – Helen Hart a formidable Mrs Evangeline “call me mother” Harcourt, with David Slater a larger-than-life Wall Street banker. The principals are led by Robyn Gowers' cynical chanteuse Reno, making the most of all those memorable numbers, well supported by her glamorous Angels. Tom Harper brings an easy charm, and impressive song and dance skills, to Billy Crocker and his many OTT disguises, while Katie Doran makes a notable CAODS début as heiress Hope Harcourt. Plenty of show-stopping production numbers [Claire Carr the choreographer] – a great group photo for the anthem that opens Act Two, the sure-fire tap routine for the title number, a stunning Gabriel, and, since this is the 1962 version, some rarer delights, including Let's Step Out [from Fifty Million Frenchman] – which might have been improved by a few more chorus boys – and Heaven Hop, nicely dressed in summer frocks. The company sports splendid costumes throughout; with the carefully styled wigs, they lend polish and pizzazz to this very enjoyable escapist musical.

Michael Gray