

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels – 27 February 2018

Review by Theatre Life

When one thinks about Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, one usually associates it with Michael Caine and Steve Martin, so this musical is perhaps not as well known as it should be but CAODS gave us a great delivery of this fun storyline.

I have to say the cast was somewhat different to those of recent shows I have seen at Chelmsford but that just shows the breadth of performers they have available within the society. The story revolves around two conmen from opposite sides of the tracks – Lawrence Jameson played by Barry Hester and Freddie Benson played by Kieran Bacon. I liked both the portrayals but I have to say Barry Hester gave us a masterclass in charm and charisma and his ease of performance was such a joy to watch.

By contrast, Kieran Bacon filled the stage with high octane energy and quirkiness and delivered much of the physical humour in the script perfectly. Claire Carr as the Soap Queen, Christine Colgate, was equally strong with great stage presence and her expert ability to mix humour with beauty on stage was perfect casting for this role.

I particularly liked the pairing of David Slater as Andre and Helen Hart as Muriel Eubanks – both came into their own in their rendition ‘Like Zis, Like Zat’ and this, in particular, gave a real lift to Act Two. Helen Meah also gave a feisty performance as Oklahoma Oil Princess, Jolene Oakes.

I have to say some of the company numbers lacked some energy and precision tonight but that may be down to first night nerves however, the simple set which framed the scenes was further enhanced by a good selection of furniture and props which were all smoothly manipulated by the cast. It worked really well and added to the overall feel of the show.

The orchestra sounded great although at the beginning, in places, it was a little too loud to hear the dialogue and therefore understand the beginning of the storyline. This was also an issue with the vocal group in ‘What was a Woman to Do’ with both diction and orchestral volume meaning it was difficult to hear the lyrics which was a shame but hopefully this can be ironed out for subsequent performances.

However, the show was visually enchanting and all the costumes looked fantastic, with colour coding in certain scenes and some very glamorous ladies in wonderful hats and accessories throughout, so my congratulations must go to the wardrobe team.

I commend the society on their choice of production and if you haven’t seen the show and love the film, then you really need to get tickets for a rib tickling night out or alternatively just join the cast basking in the French Riviera sunshine and get away from your winter weather worries. Tickets are still available for some remaining performances and you won’t be disappointed as they ‘Give You Want You Want’ with a great nights entertainment.