

**Carousel - Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society at the Civic Theatre (26<sup>th</sup> February ) 2008.**    Review by Cheryl Rogers

An old favourite, Rogers and Hammerstein's 'Carousel' returned to the Civic Theatre in February. The opening sequence with the magnificent CAODS carousel - built thirteen years ago by their own workshop team – set the scene to the familiar strains of the Carousel Waltz. This then, is a musical beloved by those who remember it from their youth, however, whilst it is packed full of songs that have been sung many times by various famous performers, it does not seem to have the same appeal for a young audience judging by the age of those present on this particular evening. The story of the bad boy and the good girl who fall in love and are parted by tragedy is poignant, and done well can still have the audience wiping a tear at the end, I noticed a few when the curtain came down.

The main players in this production performed well and Stuart Woolner as Billy Bigelow was totally believable as the barker on the carousel. His rendition of the Soliloquy had the audience spellbound, he sang it beautifully. Claire Carr made a gentle Julie and Christie Booth as Carrie Pipperidge, demonstrated yet again that she can really play comedy, as well as having a lovely singing voice. The minor characters are as important to the whole production as those in the principal roles and performed well, with Jonathan Davis being surly and thoroughly unpleasant as Jigger Craigin, the villain of the piece, and Caroline Escott (Mrs Mullin) having fun with this overblown, colourful character. Helen Meah was delightful to watch as Louise, her dancing and flowing movement looked effortless, she and Tom Harper (as the carnival boy) made a great partnership. Kevin Abrey, was a natural for Mr Snow, he is at his best when playing a pompous character.

A rather old fashioned and dated musical then, that was slow to come alive in act one and lacked a certain amount of conviction to an audience used to modern theatre. However, under the direction of Ray Jeffery it sprang to life in act two with stunning all-white costumes and props, making quite magical scenes to end the show. I'm sure that those who love Carousel enjoyed this production and relished the opportunity to see this show again.