

My Fair Lady

Directed by Ray Jeffery

Musical Director Bryan Cass

I have come to expect a very professional production from CAODS, and especially a very classy and sumptuous show from director Ray Jeffery. This was indeed a beautiful, stunning classic which took us to the streets of Soho with the flower sellers and costermongers of Old London Town. Also sharing the streets were the elite on their way to the opera. This production was beautifully set, with excellent choreography by Ray Jeffery. I have to say at this point that the ensemble was absolute brilliant. Every one of them had a smile on their face and kept in character the whole way through the show. Their enthusiasm and energy really made this show a joy to watch.

Professor Higgins (John Sullivan) gave a strong well rounded characterisation of a spoilt, chauvinistic male, with his clear singing voice and rounded vowels he was spot on in the role. A few lines lost during the middle of the show, were very ably covered and a few times he seemed late coming into scenes, which did sometimes slow the pace. The partnership with his friend Colonel Pickering, (acted very ably by Kevin Abrey), gave us a real belief in their friendship and the rapport between them. Kevin provided some wonderfully quiet humour but I did feel sorry for him when the Professor threw a book at him while he was trying to sleep under the newspaper.

Mrs Pearce, acted by the lovely Jean Pinkney, gave us a warm, kind housekeeper, totally believable throughout the production. The maids and butler, each who kept in character throughout, added to the belief of the household, giving colour to the show.

Mrs Higgins (Lynette Sullivan) delivered her lines impeccably and was suitably elegant and stylish. I was totally convinced by her portrayal and it must have been interesting for her to play the mother to her real life husband!

Freddy Eynsford-Hill (Kieran Bacon) not only had a beautiful singing voice and a warm presence on stage but was also assistant to the director, so it must have been a very interesting rehearsal period for him. I also heard him on BBC Essex giving an excellent interview; his passion for the show was evident.

A very comedic, funny, eccentric Zoltan Karpathy, played by Bruce Thomson, made me laugh out loud. Bruce is made for comedy; he really made this role his own with the incredibly silly, black beard, it just goes to show that small cameo roles can make an actor shine and this certainly was the case with Bruce. I hope to see him do more on stage very soon.

The most wonderful role of Alfred P Doolittle (Barry Hester) was a complete and utter joy. As soon as he burst onto the stage the whole show lit up, he made the show burst into life even more. I really felt his stage presence was superb and for me one of the best actors in the production. Huge congratulations Barry, for a great character.

Of course the accolades have to go to the star, Eliza Doolittle (Joanne Quinney) Beautiful to look at and with a stunning voice, she stole the show. I must admit her accent at the beginning seemed a little forced and slightly 'Brummy' at times but once she got into her stride, she gave us a moving, emotional Eliza and the chemistry between her and Higgins was evident. Joanne is a very accomplished actor and singer, she gave a very believable, polished performance.

There were significant contributions from other characters including Harry and Jamie (Michael Bardo and Kevin Richards), the pub landlord George (David Yetton), Mrs Eynsford Hill (Angela Broad) and all of the others in this huge cast who made the show a huge success.

Full praise too should be given to the Wardrobe Mistress, Lynette Sullivan and Wig Supremo, Patsy Page. The Black and White racing scene was a treat although for myself I would have like to have seen all in black and white rather than the principles in different colours but that is obviously a small point, when every actor looked so correct in their character outfits.

The sets were beautiful and of course the props were outstanding. The backstage crew did a good job although on the night we attended there was a small problem, when a cloth came down too early in a scene and stopped half way. There were also a couple of lighting issues; when the butler and maids were centre stage, the butler was not lit and the stage left, auditorium floor spot, coming on too early but these were obviously one offs and I'm sure were rectified on the following nights.

Bryan Cass the musical director and his excellent orchestra treated us to a fantastic and uplifting score, I never felt that they were too loud or drowned out the singers.

I would like to thank Gill Plumtree, the President of CAODS, for looking after us during the show and for inviting us to come. It is always such a pleasure to see your shows as they are so professional and we look forward to coming to your open evening in April. Congratulations to all for a really excellent production.

Christine Davidson Noda East District 8