

Mame burned up the energy

1979

MAME — CIVIC THEATRE

I AM pleased to report that in all the high-kicking, foot-stamping production numbers, only one leg was broken, and that belonged to a white prop piano.

Alas, the brilliance and razzamatazz of Ray Jeffery's production of Mame for CAODS this week at the Civic cannot disguise the thin plot, leaden dialogue, and the fact that there are only a couple of passable songs besides the big one.

Betty Worrall, as Auntie Mame, and Audrey Hinton as her oldest friend, both had bags of presence, but not really enough voice to belt out the noisier numbers unamplified.

Peter Smith, as the dapper Oriental butler, and Philip Gill, as the older Patrick, both gave very polished performances (and both also found their way into the irresistible Act I finale).

The orchestra, all brass and reeds, needed a lot more rehearsal. All credit to the amateur cast and crew on stage for achieving, in an impossible get-in schedule, a standard that put the gentlemen of the pit to shame.

As usual, there were magnificent moments — New York bursting on stage in the opening number, and the imaginative Open a New Window to name two of many — and gorgeous costumes with countless changes. But much of the energy seemed applied to little real purpose, and I came away slightly disappointed.

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