

# Kipps- The New Half a Sixpence

DATE	23rd March 2022
SOCIETY	Chelmsford Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society
VENUE	The Civic Theatre Chelmsford
TYPE OF PRODUCTION	Musical
DIRECTOR	Claire Carr
MUSICAL DIRECTOR	Rachel Plunkett
CHOREOGRAPHER	Claire Carr
WRITTEN BY	Julian Fellowes

## Report

**Author: Christine Davidson**

**Kipps - The New Half a Sixpence**

**Written by Julian Fellowes**

**Director & Choreographer Claire Carr**

**Musical Director Rachel Plunkett**

**The Civic Theatre Chelmsford**

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I am always thrilled to be invited to CAODS Open Evenings to hear from the director about their next production and their vision for the coming show. Claire Carr, the NODA award winning director, spoke with such enthusiasm and energy during that night about her forthcoming show, Kipps, that I knew her production would be excellent. When she then showed us the video for the set I couldn't wait to see if it was indeed as beautiful as the images. I was not to be disappointed. The set was drop dead gorgeous and worth every penny that CAODS spent on giving us a very professional look to the show. The costumes were splendid as were the eighty wigs provided by the wonderful Patsy Page. Heaven know just how long it must have taken her to put them together.

This show was a masterpiece in the richness of talent that CAODS have in spades. The singing from everyone was simply beautiful and not once did I ever feel that anyone was out of tune. The work that Claire must have done with Rachel Plunkett the Musical Director really showed. I understand from Claire that for the two weeks before the show nearly half the cast were down with the dreaded Covid. Because of the complexity of the set build and COVID the technical rehearsal was limited to only the first act, starting the tech at eight in the evening. So hats off to the crew who did a really terrific job in giving us an almost seamless change of scenes and complete fluency of technical cue changes.

As a director, I know just how hard it is to get a show together, especially in these difficult times. However to see this wonderful, energetic and colourful show made me forget, for just a while, the troubles that are happening around the world.

Arthur Kipps was played by the hugely talented and very charismatic Tom Harper-Gray. An ordinary, overworked Drapers assistant, he dreams of a better life. When he comes into a fortune he gets confused by his new wealth. Forgetting his first love Ann Pornick he falls for the beautiful Helen Walsingham. Both these ladies love him but will he choose the right one??

Tom played the role with innocence and joy; I think half the ladies in the audience fell in love with him. Very cheerful and full of boundless energy he really got the characterisation of the role. His dancing and singing were excellent throughout and his acting ability was totally believable.

Ann Pornick, (Joanne Quinney) Kipps young love, was a joy with a beautiful voice and an expressive face. I loved her sad solo of 'Long ago', again good characterisation of the role here. So much work must have been done to get each of these roles just right and this was certainly achieved.

The friends of Kipps, Sid (Michael Bardo), Flo (Charlotte Broad), Piece (Kieran Bacon) & Buggins (Jimmy Hooper) were excellent, each with their own character and likeability. I loved food loving Buggins. The team worked really well together giving spirited performances. While Flo and Anne's duet - 'Just a little Happiness' was beautiful.

Katie Doran as Helen Walsingham and her harridan of a mother Mrs Walsingham (Diana Easton) were the epitome of high class society; they really portrayed the sophistication and elegance of the Edwardian age. Katie kept the accent totally throughout the show and looked stunning. Her singing voice was, as with all the others, superb. Diana was just right for the role of the dragon of a mother, who wanted to get her hands on Kipps inheritance. Loud, overbearing and bossy she made the role her own. Ian Gilbert as the swindling son was also powerful in speech and song.

I loved the role of Chitterlow (Johnathan Davis). This actor has charisma in spades; his song 'The Joy of the Theatre' was brilliant and gave us a larger than life character. I do hope I see him again as he really does bring such energy into his acting.

Robyn Gowers as Lady Punnet portrayed a regal and elegant lady but also showed just how much joy you can have when you allow yourself to get together to sing 'Pick Out a Simple Tune'. She seemed to have great fun playing the spoons. Robyn has a very comedic acting ability and her joy of acting just shows in her face. As Production Assistant to Claire, she really is very knowledgeable and is a great person to have on stage with you.

With a huge cast of forty I am not sure just how Clare got everyone on the stage at the same time. Lots of changes of costumes, wigs and sets, this was a huge undertaking by Clare and her team, they worked wonders. The ensemble was terrific and the choreography well thought out with so many on stage. Just sometimes it seemed a while for everyone to get off stage but with this being only the second night I totally understood the difficulties.

Lighting and sound were excellent and the orchestra led by Rachel were superb and never drowned out the cast. We again thank Jill Plumtree for looking after us so well and for the very welcome refreshments in the interval. As you can guess by this report, we both loved the show and send our congratulations to everyone involved.

**Christine Davidson**

**Noda District 8**