

9 to 5 The Musical

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SOCIETY Chelmsford Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society

VENUE Chelmsford Theatre

TYPE OF PRODUCTION Musical

DIRECTOR Sallie Warrington

CHOREOGRAPHER Sallie Warrington

WRITTEN BY Dolly Parton

Author: Christine Davidson

Chelmsford Amateur Operatic Dramatic Society (CAODS)

Chelmsford Theatre

9 to 5 The Musical

Director and Choreographer Sallie Warrington

Musical Director Clare Penfold

What a wonderful way to open the newly refurbished Chelmsford Theatre. To be there for the first night with a sell-out audience, is such a great thing, with a bustling excitement, from the crowd awaiting this feel good musical. Just the thing for a cold January to bring us all out and make us go home singing the famous 9 to 5 song.

Based initially on a play written by Dolly Parton, it went on to be a box office hit in 1980 as a film which she starred in with Jane Fonda. The stage version gained numerous awards on Broadway and transferred to the UK in 2012 running until the Pandemic. It tells the story of three secretaries, turning the tables on their chauvinistic, sexist boss who ultimately gets his comeuppance. This show is full of love, friendship and revenge!

Sallie Warrington, the director and choreographer has obviously worked incredibly hard on this show, as the first night showed no sign of nerves or weakness from any of the cast. The confidence and exuberance of all the actors was overwhelming and the happiness from them all at being back on the stage gave the audience a really great evening. Nice to see such a young cast on stage and new faces.

The professional set was smart, although a few teething problems with movement of the flats, this I put down to being the first night and not having a lot of time to get used to the many changes this show needed. I'm sure by tomorrow this will be a smooth transition.

Good use of lighting, although sometimes the follow spots did not get to the leads in time but again this will obviously be ironed out by the next performance. Projection for the video of Dolly Parton was clear and well done.

This is a vehicle for leading ladies and the three chosen to play Violet, Doralee and Judy were exceptional. They all gave powerful characterisation of each of their roles. Opening the show with 9 to 5, this was a great start to a super night's high energy entertainment.

Robyn Gowers as Violet, gave us her usual commanding performance, totally at ease on the stage she shows great authority. Her song 'One of the boys' was one of my personal favourites. The ensemble all in black and white were striking with Robyn in a fabulous white silk trouser suit. One powerful actress and totally believable that she would finally take over as CEO in the end.

Keeley Denman as Doralee is a Dolly Parton lookalike. With figure and huge wig to match her really powerful voice and the accent made us almost look twice to see it really wasn't Dolly! She kept her man and her boss sweet. I loved her song 'Backwoods Barbie'. Some nice work at the beginning, when everyone was against her, because they mistook her for the mistress of Hart. I felt her loneliness and hurt.

Nicola Harrington-Smith as Judy, the new girl, whose husband had run off with a nineteen year old, leaving her stranded and having no office skills, played the role excellently. Again another very strong voice. Her song 'Get out and stay out' was sung very emotionally with tears and anger. I also loved her dancing number 'Dance of Death' where not only did she look sensational but danced incredibly well.

Frankie Mae as Roz the sycophantic admin assistant and office spy was a joy to watch. Uptight, bossy and loving sending numerous memos to the employees, she has a wonderful scene where she strips off to reveal red silk undies and suspenders, singing the song, 'Hart to Hart'. What a comedic, wonderful role to play. I loved her. Her characterisation work was spot on. Well done Frankie.

Gareth Barton as Franklin Hart, the odious, overbearing, sexist boss (a Magnum look alike with wig and moustache), gave us a sleazy horrible monster of a man who likes to be one of the boys and is intent on having his way with Doralee. His rendition of 'Here for you' made me feel almost ill which is entirely what he should be doing as he really made me shudder. Having to put up with being murdered three times in 'Dance of Death' and then being hung up, trussed like a turkey in his bedroom, he certainly went through it during the show. Well done Gareth.

A lovely performance by Kieran Bacon as Joe. I particularly loved the duet between him and Violet 'Let love grow'. It was beautifully sung and a very romantic moment between the two.

Caroline Escott as Margaret the drunk office worker, who in the last scene is totally transformed, gave a good comic cameo performance. Andrew Harding as Dwayne was a hunky, fit Cowboy spouse for Doralee. Michael Bardo as Dick the wayward ex-husband of Judy was suitably careless of her feelings and walked away without a thought for her. Good to see Judy finally getting rid of him when he wanted her back. I felt the audience wanted to cheer as he was pushed off by Judy.

Hayden Wagland as Josh, Violets son and Joanne Quinney as Missy Hart, also brought good characterisation to their roles. Joanne was also the Dance Captain and must be so proud of her team who were exceptional. Katie Doran as Helen Haydock gave life to Maria as did Ellie Darrall as Kathy and last but not least Kevin Richards, a stalwart of CAODS came on as Tinsworthy and dominated the stage with his presence as the company president, making a flying visit to Consolidated's offices and sending Hart to Bolivia.

The orchestra led by Clare Penfold gave good well-honed accompaniment throughout. Radio mics were used well and the sound was excellent. Each and every actor was clear whether singing or acting. Accents on the whole were also good.

Costumes were appropriate for all the cast and props reinforced the era. I loved the dream sequence number, especially the green trees and the fig leaves in appropriate places. The expressions on the faces of the men in these costumes was hilarious. Wigs again were supplied by Patsy Page who is sadly retiring and I'm sure all the local companies are going to miss her wonderful creations.

The ensemble was truly excellent and they were obviously well drilled by Sallie Warrington. Use of the stage and the flow of movement worked well and gave us a fast fun evening although the interval seemed to be extra-long on the first night. Maybe trying to get all the audience out of the bar was the problem. Something for the newly opened theatre to look at as the bar really did seem very full and probably needed more staff.

We always look forward to coming to see CAODS productions as we know by now just how professional their shows are, giving the audience a truly wonderful production. The hospitality shown to us is always friendly and delightful. Their programme is full of photos and detail, and will be entered for next the seasons awards

This was an excellent evening's entertainment and I urge you to get a ticket. Their show is on till Wednesday and I know tickets are going fast. Congratulations to everyone for a fab first night.

Christine Davidson, NODA East District 8 rep