

OVERALL PRODUCTION

Whenever I attend a BMYP Production I always feel that if anyone deserves a Rose Bowl with gold trimmings it is Vicki Klein herself, but I have a feeling you would all agree with me on that!

Once again I loved every minute of the Show with its iconic wonderful score, exhilarating choreography, singing, costumes and sets and especially the projections so expertly presented.

The technical input was outstanding for this Production and was a special achievement for your set designer and construction team, lighting and sound technician and film sequence 'creator'. The anticipated arrangement for the falling rain and facility for dancing (with splashing) was totally professional and did not disappoint, in other words was well worth it, whatever it took!

The cast identified with their characters very well and as usual had stunning vitality. I would just comment that the clarity of the diction needs to be improved in general, especially amongst the male members of the Company when assuming an American accent. The confident style and fast pace of the dialogue should not be underestimated for this genre of American musical.

Apart from this problem manifesting itself now and again, the Show bubbled along at a cracking pace, interspersed with the show stopping numbers.

There were many highlights such as 'Fit As A Fiddle', 'You Stepped Out Of A Dream', 'You Were Meant For Me', with the special effects, 'Make Em Laugh', 'Beautiful Girls', 'Broadway Melody', 'Good Mornin' and 'Singin' In The Rain'. All were performed with show biz sparkle.

The filmed sequences involving Lina and Don captured the comedy timing spot on, I can still see Lina falling over backwards when the lead from her microphone became entangled. All the business with the dubbing seemed flawless and was very funny indeed.

I was impressed by Ben Richer's apparent ease in dealing the cascading 'Rain', not everybody is a water baby and I understand he did not have long to rehearse before first night. He looked completely at ease, I was amused by the direction in the script notes that the water 'should be warm' to avoid the actor getting a cold!

Above all the Hollywood film 'scene' came over so well and sense of the Period. The tense studio atmosphere of rivalry between the stars and ambition of up and coming starlets under the control of the studio bosses was cleverly realised. The Period stance and general movement and deportment of the cast conveyed a lot.

The Company was well organised and disciplined, with as usual, talent shining through to give us all an entertaining evening.

MUSICAL DIRECTION AND SINGING

The band was in very capable hands and soon had us enthralled with the familiar score, the toe tapping rhythms and romantic melodies supporting the young cast as they confidently sang and danced their way through the Show. The balance with the body-mics was carefully judged, the timing of the cues slick and seamless. The frequent box office hits were much enjoyed and had been well taught and rehearsed.

CHOREOGRAPHY

Superlatives are really all I can offer!

The Buzz Berkeley element included was most enjoyable. 'You Stepped Out Of A Dream' and 'Beautiful Girls' with the glamorous costumes, feathers and so on were great. The tap numbers were exhilarating to watch and a big achievement for the Company, not forgetting the memorable Lockwood and Brown early on. 'The Gotta Dance' sequence from 'Broadway Melody' was brilliant. 'You Were Meant For Me', on the ladder with effects, and 'Good Mornin' were very engaging, altho' I did wonder if you were going to risk the sofa business as in the film, but I imagine it would be too risky. 'Make Em Laugh' was a triumph as was 'Moses Supposes'.

'Singin' In The Rain' was fabulous and fulfilled all expectations.

SET DESIGN

The simple scenery with token props was absolutely right with all the dance involved and constant changes of location. The first scene set outside Graumann's Chinese theatre and the stars making their entrance down the aisles gave the impression of space and the Hollywood Boulevard stretching in the distance. I enjoyed the Boulevard shop fronts for scene 4 and the simple impression of R. F. Simpson's mansion with the enormous cake. The monumental studios and background filming were convincing, the 'Dolly' was very authentic looking. Don's Spanish house was acceptable, likewise Simpson's office and Lina's dressing room.

The falling rain in the foreground of the Boulevard and boxed section for Don to dance in was excellent and one can only say professionally handled, for such an iconic number it had to be done properly and it was.

The film clips of Lina and Don were superb and looked so authentic, this must have taken a lot of expertise to perfect, so everyone involved deserves high praise.

LIGHTING AND SOUND EFFECTS

This all important technical contribution was expertly handled and perhaps should be taking the credit for all those great film clips.

The glitzy Hollywood atmosphere was created from the start. The effects accompanying 'You Were Meant For Me' were successful if not fully realised.

The sound for Lina's disastrous attempts to be acceptable for talkies was skilfully synchronised with all the changes of volume and erratic bleeps, squeaks and so on. The vocal coaching episodes being very amusing.

The sound of the rain was natural and convincing.

The synchronised singing for Lina from Kathy was brilliant. The use of the spots and general lighting changes enhanced the action and were a great support to the cast, for example the lit 'windows' framing the back of the set for 'Broadway Rhythm'.

COSTUMES

A delightful sense of Period as maintained throughout. I loved the pink 'halter' dresses for 'All I Do Is Dream Of You' with the female dancers. The black and white sophisticated outfits complete with plumes of feathers were spectacular. I enjoyed the sleeveless fairisle jumpers for some of the boys. The Director's plus fours were nostalgically a reminder of those early pioneer days in film.

The celebrities at the opening were stunning and set the tone. The Principals were appropriately costumed to suit their characters, Kathy demurely pretty, Lina a flamboyant femme fatale.

The 18th Century costumes and wigs for the silent film clips were the icing on the cake.

INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCES

Kathy Seldon

This was a charmingly poised characterisation that ticked all the boxes from very able dancing ability and acting skills to a lovely mature singing voice, together with just the right appearance in contrast to the brittle Lina. The interaction with Don at the beginning was suitably cautious developing into loyal true love. The musical numbers were much enjoyed, especially the solo 'You Are My Lucky Star', 'Would You' and 'Good Mornin' were other highlights. The tap was slick and I could see meticulously rehearsed. The cream cake episode was perfectly timed, not an easy task.

Don Lockwood

The confident film star image came over well with his desire for genuine love coming through underneath all the bravado. Dancing skills were very impressive, the musical numbers treat upon treat, culminating in the much anticipated 'Singin' In The Rain'. The interaction with Cosmo particularly in 'Fit As A Fiddle' and 'Moses Supposes' was most entertaining throughout. The love story with Kathy developed with sincerity.

The exasperated interaction with Lina was fun.

'Singin' In The Rain' had special demands because it is so unusual. The relaxed acceptance of getting soaked as the character and as a performer was admirably unselfconscious.

A pleasant singing voice did full justice to the musical numbers, but a little more care needs to be taken when projecting an American accent, keep the diction and articulation under control to ensure the all important clarity.

Lina Lamont

A wonderful role for a comedienne and I should think very much coveted. Getting the 'voice' is of course the main challenge and judging by the laughs in the audience this was very successful. 'What's Wrong With Me' was very funny indeed with lots of dynamics to colour the words. The physicality of the role gave lots of opportunity for expressive movement, gesture and facial expressions all portraying Lina's self obsessed character. The film clips were a real highlight and I can see them now together with that backward fall and the simpering on screen character. The possessive interaction with Don and jealousy of Kathy were played without inhibitions.

Cosmo Brown

A talented performer with the rare gift of vitality that really shone in 'Make Em Laugh', this was an achievement in itself with all the business involved whilst singing and dancing. Dancing skills were put to good use in the iconic 'Good Mornin' and the fast moving 'Moses Supposes'. The interaction with Don was supportive and propelled the action forward at a bubbling pace, here again keep diction and articulation under control to ensure clarity.

Zelda Zanders

The scene, with Lina leading up to her 'What's Wrong With Me' captured the comedy with a telling characterisation as she ingratiated herself with the impossible star.

Miss Dinsmore

This cameo was most amusing as we saw her tackling a most discouraging job to get Lina's voice production fit for purpose. Body language and facial expressions said it all!

R & Simpson

An authoritative appearance was an asset to the storyline, the dialogue was projected with style and conviction as the studio boss, a mature performance.

Roscoe Dexter

A convincing appearance and demeanour for a stereotype 20's film director of the era. The tactful handling of Lina and enthusiasm to make everything work came through with a strong stage presence. The Period props were handled well.

Production Tenor

A memorable rendition of 'Beautiful Girls', well sung with a subtle sense of humour. Appearance complimenting the sense of Period with the moustache and so on.

Other cameos and there were many, deserve congratulations. There were no weak links, for instance Dora Bailey who announced the arrival of the stars at the beginning did an excellent job.

The whole cast gave a 100% and looked as if they were really enjoying performing, particularly for that sensational Finale.

Thank You For The Kind Hospitality

And

Best Wishes for Future Productions

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Linda Evans". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the printed text.

Linda Evans