

The Musical Geek - Musical Theatre Reviews

42nd Street (Studley Operatic Society)

April 07, 2022

There is something really appealing about a show within a show, it gets to the heart of what performance is all about and opens the curtains on the creation process, warts and all. Pretty Lady isn't a musical that many would be aware of (it isn't Pretty Woman^l by the way, that's a totally different story) but, there are few that can't be aware of the powerhouse song and dance spectacular that is 42nd Street.

Studley Operatic Society have assembled an equally powerful company to bring their production to the stage at The Palace Theatre in Redditch. Let me depart from the norm here and mention some names that probably wouldn't be included in a review, Barbara Camelford, Carole Corden, Val Dallaway, Alison Ellis and Hannah Johnson as Dressers and Elaine Lawrence, Doreen Owen and Jacqueline Perry covering Costumes. There is an insane amount of costume change in this production and without this team it simply wouldn't work as seamlessly as it does.

When it comes to the performance itself there are just so many incredible character portrayals, vocals and dance moves (much to the credit of tap choreographer, Cassie Rivett) to mention and they all build to specific musical number where that performer simply has the audience in their pocket.

Kelly-Louise Mitchell is fittingly temperamental and prima donna like as Dorothy Brock, her soulful vocal is a joy, particularly in the number 'I Know Now' (if you are looking for something similar, listen to Ella Fitzgerald, you'll see what I mean). It needs something robust to even try and keep Miss Brock in check, the imposing figure of Matthew Bridgewater as boyfriend Pat Denning is under her spell, as is sugar daddy Abner Dillon (a characterful performance from Steve Lengden) but, director Julian Marsh (an immense piece of acting from Richard Smith with a vocal that almost lifts the roof off the venue in Lullaby of Broadway) gets as close as anybody can.

isn't big and brash as many songs in musicals go but, it is a vehicle for some great performances in this production. Outstanding stage presence and vocals from Jessica Horabin as Maggie Jones, joint writer of and performer in Pretty Lady and a memorable dance

sequence between her writing partner Bert Barry (played enthusiastically by Jeremy Dobbins) and chorus girl 'Anytime' Annie (played with flair by Sophie Hill, worth noting that Ginger Rogers played that part in the 1933 Movie, lucky for her Miss Hill wasn't alive in those days!).

It would be unfair not to mention some of the other great supporting performances, including Ryan Allen-Rose as dance director Andy Lee, Kim Knight as Phyllis Dale, Penny Hoy as Lorraine Fleming, Debbie Mitchell as Gladys and Cassie Rivett as Diane Lorimer, alongside a talented ensemble cast, creating a magnificent night of entertainment, brought to the stage by seasoned directors Alison & Kevin Hirons and musical director Edward Caine.

You simply shouldn't miss those 'dancing feet' while you have the chance to see them through to 9th April 2022.



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