



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Shinfield Players Theatre  
Production : Our House  
Date : 06/10/2022  
Venue : Shinfield Players Theatre

## Show Report

I was very pleased to be invited to see Shinfield Players Theatre's production of Our House and was given a warm welcome by the Front of House Team. After delays due to Covid and then the damage the theatre sustained in Storm Eunice the show finally hit the stage with a bang. The production team and cast are to be commended for "weathering the storm" of delays and cast changes to produce a vibrant and enjoyable show. The show based on the words and music from Madness songs and the book by Tim Firth is set in 1980's Camden and tells the story of Joe Casey. Joe trying to impress his girlfriend on a night out to celebrate his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday breaks into a building to look down on Casey Street where he lives. We then follow two sides of his story as his character either stays to face the music (good Joe) or runs (bad Joe) from the police.

### Cast (in order of appearance)

**Rachel Lockwood** (Kath) gave an emotional performance as Joe's mother showing lovely changes in character as she interacted with both good and bad Joe. Her singing voice was clear and tuneful in her solos "Magistrate's Court" and "One Better Day". On occasions her accent was a bit inconsistent, but she made a really good effort with it. Her chemistry with young Dad and her son Joe was warm and believable and she played the part of an '80s North London Mum really well.

**Matt Chishick** (Joe's Dad) gave a really strong performance as Joe's Dad. It is a difficult part to play, as except for at the beginning when courting Kath, he is dead and, in the background, narrating the story. This was a powerful performance and whilst not physically interacting with anyone on stage, you really got the feeling that he was there in their presence. Matt has a lovely singing voice, and his performance was emotional, and controlled. I particularly enjoyed his very poignant rendition of "One Better Day".

**Matt Oxley** (Joe Casey)

This was a huge part with Matt not only having to sing and dance but also to play two very different characters Good and Bad Joe. He showed a clear distinction between these two characters with different postures, expressions and gestures and looked relaxed on stage. He interacted well with all the other actors and his relationship with each of them was clear to see. Matt has an excellent singing voice with good tone and expression and gave a lively and dynamic performance. He led many of the musical numbers mastering a range of styles brilliantly contrasting between the very upbeat numbers and those that were more thoughtful. He moved naturally around the stage and managed the very many costume changes seemingly effortlessly! Well done on an excellent performance.

**Jamie Mansfield** (Emmo) and **Joseph Morbey** (Lewis) These two worked so well together with good chemistry and comic timing. Jamie as Emmo was the more boisterous of the two, whilst Joseph as Lewis was more sensitive. Both were fiercely protective of Joe's Mum who had taken them in as kids. Jamie had a lovely rich singing voice with good tone and tuning.

**Katie Thrussell** (Billie) **Sami Sharp** (Angie) Katie and Sami playing Sarah's two friends always appeared on stage as a pair and were an excellent double-act. They had great rapport and left the audience in no doubt about what they were feeling about any situation. In contrast to the often brash or sarcastic characterisation, they also showed softness towards Sarah when things were going badly. Both Katie and Sami gave strong energetic performances with a good understanding of their characters and really worked the stage. Both sang well and joined the dance routines with energy and enthusiasm.

**Charley Caswell** (Sarah)

Charley was totally believable in her role as Joe's girlfriend. She had a purity and innocence that was perfect for the part. She had lovely chemistry with Matt and gave a contrast in her character when she was with either good or bad Joe. She worked well with her loud and sarcastic friends giving some lovely moments particularly at the Las Vegas wedding. Charley has a lovely pure singing voice. Her singing was extremely expressive with moments of power contrasted with much more tender moments that was evident throughout but particularly in "It Must Be Love" with Joe and "NW5" with Dad.

**Alex Hobbs** as (Reecey) a petty criminal was charming, and superficially likeable but with an underlying dangerous side to his character. He was manipulating and clearly a risk to Joe drawing both versions to him and a life of crime. Developing the ruthlessness to his character as the story progressed would have given more depth to his performance as the story unfolded. He sang confidently and with good volume.

**Tom Horrox** (Mr Pressman) Tom made the most of his part as the middle-aged, thoroughly unscrupulous property developer and portrayed a very believable character. He showed lovely contrast in his dealing good and bad Joe and was appropriately sleazy in his feelings toward his secretary.

**Jack Rowland** (Callum) As Sarah's university boyfriend this was a fairly small role, which Jack played well and in character maintaining his Scottish accent throughout. He brought a lovely comic moment when he play fought with Joe with perfect comic timing.

**Abi Jackson, Alex Hobbs, Caitlin Lammin, Camilla Fillingham, Daisy Collins, Daniel Pyke, Derek Lockwood, Eloise Seery, Heaven King, Holly Adamson, Jack Rowland, Janine McCoull, Jo Oldach, Joe Richardson, Karen Todd, Matt Daniell, Tom Horrox and Zoë Keys, (Ensemble)**

The ensemble worked together well as a group with a good sense of team spirit. Many had step forward minor roles which they played very with character and expression. A few to mention are Matt D in his role as drunk Grandad, Jo as Mr Pressman's secretary and Caitlin in their role as Joe's double managing to swap places with him so seamlessly that I was taken by surprise. The ensemble sang strongly with some lovely harmonies giving good support to the principals in the group numbers. I particularly enjoyed the harmony in "Wings of a Dove. They mastered the slick choreographed routines really well, with energy, smiling and having fun.

## **Creatives**

### **Heidi Ashton** (Director)

I take my hat off to Heidi and her team, who after the pandemic and storm damage were able to start again, realise their vision and deliver an excellent and vibrant show. Heidi ensured that the actors had been well prepared and understood their characters which were believable and delivered very well. There was some very good casting and Heidi had developed the chemistry between the actors so that they were very natural together. Switching between two sides of the story could have led to some confusion for the audience, but by using different costumes for good and bad Joe and the rotating black and white doors meant that it was clear to follow. There were some clever touches and the scene in the car was very well managed.

**Rachel Lockwood** (Producer) With such a large cast and so many costume changes and elements to manage, I am sure that Heidi was glad to have such an experienced producer alongside her.

### **Lindsay Belt** (Choreographer) **Charley Caswell and Katy Pey** (Dance Captains)

The energetic choreography for this show was obviously inspired by Madness and created the mood of the story straight from the first chorus number. The routines were engaging and made good use of repeated patterns which were extremely effective. The cast had been well trained, and their movements were slick and precise and synchronised. Lindsay gave some nice contrast in the dancing and movement with not just lively and fast-moving numbers.

### **Lara Savory** (Musical Director)

Lara had clearly worked hard to produce high standards of the vocals, not only with the principals but also with the Ensemble. All of the singers produced accomplished performances and the balance of voices was superb, with all of the different tones blending very well indeed. Lara also led the band who accompanied the singers and ensured that they were well supported.

**Lara Savory, Phil Gowen, Gary Pollington, Mark Richardson, Andy Shapland, Mark Webb, Arjun Channa and Time Beavan (Band)** The band, which was positioned behind the stage were excellent, providing the strong Madness underscore reminiscent of the 80's. They were well balanced and

produced a lovely sound which enhanced and never overwhelmed the singers. A fun addition was the sax player coming onto the stage after the bows to accompany (with the band behind) a medley of songs.

**Sam Turner** (Stage Manager) assisted by stage crew managed the stage seamlessly and ensured that the large cast were able to make their entrances and exits without obstruction. They managed the two rotating doors expertly always ensuring that the right ones were facing the stage at the right time, however, on the night I watched, the crew member stage right was visible in the wings which slightly spoilt the magic. The movement of the gondola in Night boat to Cairo was very well managed and effective.

**Set design** (Pete Ashton) **Di Capel and Natalie Clarke** (Art Design) **Di Capel, Natalie Clark, Sam Turner, Yvonne Mitchell, Lucy Bolton, Tim Howling and Heidi Ashton** (Set construction)

The set was a series of brick feature flats and a screen on the large back flat used to show the different locations. The set pieces of clever rotating black and white doors were very effective and the design and finish of the car and gondola impressive and eye catching.

**Pete Ashton, Graeme Rhodes, Phil Gowen** (Technical Team) This team had clearly had fun producing the different locations and animation in the back projection. They were extremely effective and meant that scene changes were quick and seamless. The video behind the car was particularly clever and very well managed, adding to the fun in the upbeat number “Driving in my car”. I was pleased to see that the ensemble with solos as well as the principals had mics which meant that everyone could be heard. Managing so many mics was quite an undertaking for the sound team which they managed expertly with everyone being heard. The sound was very well balanced between the band and the actors in the musical numbers. The stage was well lit for the majority of the time, but there were a couple of occasions when some areas of the stage were in shadow.

**Johanna Oldach, Shinfield Wardrobe Team and Company Members** (Costumes) With 27 cast members and huge numbers of costume changes, this was quite an undertaking for the team. I think I counted over 30 changes of costume for Matt in his role of Joe, with many of the ensemble having at

least 12. In the most part the costumes worked very well and added vibrant colour to scenes. Joe's bad and good outfits worked well, and it was clear when he was which. The bridal wear looked lovely and fitting for the event. The priest outfit was appropriate, and I liked all the different legal costumes and wigs. Care, though needs to be taken with short mini-skirts and skimpy tops, particularly in fast dance routines.

**Rachel Lockwood, Debbie Wheeler and Company Members** (Properties) The set was well dressed, with all the props being authentic and appropriate for their usage.

### **Programme**

This twenty-page programme was very clear to read, and the artwork was simple but effective. The Chairman and Director's notes as well as a brief synopsis and list of musical numbers were very useful. It would have been nice to have had the addition of who was singing each number in the programme. The school report bios were an interesting and amusing touch, and it was lovely to see a photograph of each member of the cast included.

Thanks again for inviting me to the show, which was a great success.

*Cate*

NODA London District 13 Representative