National Operatic & Dramatic Association London Region

Society : Shinfield Players

Production : **Youth Group Review**

Date : Friday 3rd December 2021

Venue : Shinfield Players Theatre

Report by : Nick Humby

**Show Report**

Overall Production Impression

It is very exciting to see young performers taking their first tentative steps on stage in front of a live audience and the Shinfield Players Youth Group Review showcased the work of Junior Youth group (8- to 11-year-old), the Middle Group (11- to 13-year-olds) and the Senior Group (14- to 18-year-old) from their weekly sessions. It was great to see a diverse range of young performers tackling a challenging mix of sketches, songs, dance routines and even Shakespeare.

Simply staged, without amplification, the presentation focused on the vocal performance and dance movement and some of them would have benefitted from a prop or piece of costume to assist their characterisation and give them something to do with their hands . However, the absence of such aids made some of the performances even more impressive. The structure of the running order was driven by the age groups and ease of getting large numbers on and off stage and would have benefited from an upbeat opening number from the combined team, such as “I’ll be there for you” which closed the Junior section.

There were many impressive moments in the two hours show with some quite angst ridden acting from the Senior Girls, energetic routines from the Senior Boys, and a couple of charming songs from the Juniors and Middles. It will be fascinating to see these young talents progress over the coming years as they join the main Players shows and I hope they will be encouraged by these performances.

**Juniors and Middles**

The highlight of their section was when they came together for the Bruno Mars song “Count on me” and looked like they had overcome their nerves for a confident melodic performance . In the earlier routine, “We go together” from Grease the nerves showed, and many forgot to smile or were unsure what to do with their hands! Several young actors stood out with clear confident voices such as **Ruby** and **Freddie** in Spellbound and **Becky** and **Luna** in The Trousers as well as the young man parodying a Teacher in the opening sketch who got the biggest laugh of the evening with his wish to be a Surgeon punchline. A very good effort from all concerned and a good demonstration of how the weekly sessions are developing their skills and confidence.

**Senior Boys**

**Jonny, Drew, Charles, and Matt** were excellent in Bouncers as a group of mates planning their Friday night out and then were joined by three others for what, for me, was one of the show highlights with a lively and entertaining “Greased Lighting”. Each took their turn at the front while the rest formed a well drilled backing group. Another highlight was an excellent rendition of “Where is the life I led” sung by **Andrei** . He really sold the song well, started to use the stage and pleasantly held the final long note .

The real surprise of the show was an outstanding extract from Act 2 Scene 2 of Midsummer Night’s Dream in which **Melanie, Emily, Callum, and Andrei** played the four lovers. Not only did they speak the words with great clarity, acted with strong expression but choreographed some wonderful physical comedy as they battled each other. This was a bold choice to include and made a very good Act 1 conclusion.

Act 2 started strongly too with a charismatic presentation of “Fly me to the moon” by **Drew** with a very impressive tap routine alongside **Sinead** that was most enjoyable and skilfully synchronised followed by **Jack and Holly** with Score a sketch about marriage.

**Senior Girls**

The senior Girls section was dominated with some very strong angst ridden acting by the Girls around challenging themes of adult relationships. Lemons, Lemons, Lemons was a powerfully emotional discussion by a couple which was very well acted by **Annalise and Ayeesha** aided by the simple use of a chair for focus. Yerma too was well acted by **Anessa and Sinead** with variation in where the scene was played and believable characters created, as was the emotionally charged scene Be my baby with **Sienna, Daisy and Rebecca** as a young mother has her baby removed. The extracts from Beetlejuice and Oleanna showed that those young actresses, **Dani, Sinead, Jodie, and Abi** had strong powerful clear voices so we could hear every word. Together all these young performers all showed real potential.

The Girls came together for a lively dance routine from Hairspray “Mama I’m a big girl now” with good movement especially when they became one line across the front of the stage .

The show ended strongly as the Seniors delivered “That’s the way I like it” with the best choreography of the show .

Overall, this was a chance for young performers to make their stage debuts, and after 18 months away it must have felt like a first time for many others, but they seized the opportunity and delivered a good showcase for their potential and a step in their development as performers. They and their Group Leaders deserve the applause and congratulations that the show attracted, and I hope are encouraged to build on this experience in longer pieces in the future.

Thank you

***Nick***

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