National Operatic & Dramatic Association London Region

Society : Shinfield Players Senior Youth Group

Production : Legally Blonde

Date : Friday 12th July 2019

Venue : Shinfield Theatre

Report by : Jeanette Maskell

Show Report

I know this is one show the youngsters really relate to and want to be in; my granddaughters would certainly back this up. However it is not one that I would particularly put up there! That said I can take nothing away from the cast who performed the piece with outstanding energy and enthusiasm! It had been extremely well cast and there were some outstanding performances from some very talented members.

I felt this performance brought out the story in a way I have not seen before and the humour and pathos which played a major part in this were particularly apparent. The audience certainly thought so, as they laughed and empathised with the characters throughout.

Personally I think this is one of the best things I have seen this group do!

**Emily Miles –** (Elle Woods) – This young lady excelled in this role totally brining the role to life. Her dialogue was animated and dynamic as were her visuals. She was able to portray the bubbly fun loving shopaholic party girl and the studious refined law student with energy and vigour giving a complete all-round characterisation. She moved well and looked natural in all her routines. Her singing was confident clear and tuneful and I particularly enjoyed “Positive”. She has a natural aptitude for comedy and this really enhanced her “Serious” duet with Warner

**Charlie Walford –** (Emmett Forrest) – I really enjoyed this young man’s performance, he was quirky charming and loveable. The way he took Elle under his wing displaying an immediate attraction clear for all to see, was absolutely spot on. He has the most captivating smile which he used at every opportunity enhancing his character and transferring across the footlights to the audience. His dialogue was clearly audible and delivered with a laid back energy that really suited the character. He has a super singing voice and all his numbers were well sung and put over in character but I so enjoyed “Chip on my shoulder”.

**Kirsti Burch –** (Paulette Buonofuonte) – This young lady was bubbly, dynamic and animated her vivacious personality was contagious putting everyone she interacted with at ease. Her dialogue was well delivered with good intonation and inflection. It is the first time that I have heard “Ireland” put over wistfully and plaintively rather than being played for the comedy; and I have to say I really enjoyed it.

**Jonny Gowen –** (Warner Huntington lll) – I was amazed at how much this young man has matured and developed since I last saw him; and it was great to see that he no longer paces around. As Elle’s shallow pompous good-looking boyfriend; he captured the essence of the character perfectly. His manner demeanour and visuals bore this out fully. His voice has a really nice resonance and this enhanced the skilful delivery of his dialogue and singing. A well sung “Serious”.

**Oscar Hogg-Gomez –** (Professor Callahan) – This was a standout performance! I cannot praise this young man enough! His acting dialogue interaction and singing were outstanding culminating in a flawless portrayal. His rendition of “Blood in the Water” was exceptional and for me a highlight of the evening.

**Natalie Gault –** (Vivienne Kensington) – As the smart savvy law student this young lady was ideal. Her deportment was upright and reserved and her dialogue classy and elegant with plenty of light and shade. I liked the way her character evolved from having a total dislike of Elle to standing up for her and showing her admiration. Her part in “There right There” and “Legally Blonde Remix” was excellent.

**Emily Walford –** (Brooke Wyndham) – This role requires a lot of strength and stamina, and this young lady had both. She really captured the essence of the song by directing the lyrics at the other inmates. The song was sung with zest and fervour and her movement complimented this fully. Her dialogue was dynamic containing great modulation, and she brought a good deal of fun to the role. She worked well with Elle and their Delta Nu Nu Nu was terrific.

**Jessica Masseron –** (Serena)

**Sienna Eden –** (Pilar)

**Maddie Miles –** (Margot) – Although on the evening of my visit there was a couple of tuning issues in Margot’s opening solo and the ensuing trio they were nonetheless fantastic! They were diverse in their characterisations; one sassy yet sensible, one ditsy and daffy and one energetically athletic; but worked together consummately. Some of their dialogue was a little garbled; but overall dialogue singing and movement was great bringing vitality and vivacity to the performance. I particularly liked their Greek Chorus’. Well done girls!

**Jenny Miller –** (Kate/Judge)

**Angelika Etherington-Smith –** (Leliani) – These two minor characters were well portrayed by this pair who had good dialogue and fine singing voices.

**Johanna Oldach –** (Enid Hoops) – As the opiniated feminist this young lady came across wonderfully well. Her no nonsense dialogue was firm and capable with good light and shade. Her interaction was spot on for her character and her movement and deportment were also conducive to the role. Her part in “Right There and Legally Blonde Remix” was well sung.

**Drew Cleghorn –** (Kyle B. O’Boyle/Professor Lowell) – This young man’ s depiction of Kyle was excellent his dialogue was clear and well projected delivered absolutely straight which in turn brought out the humour. His cheeky smile and swanky walk were spot on and perfect for the character. His relationship with Paulette was first rate and when she asked what the B stood for and he answered Brendan the audience were right there! The ensuing Irish dance routine was super; well danced and lots of fun.

**Jesse Dopson –** (Sundeep Padman/Dewey)

**Connor Taylor –** (Aaron Schultz/Elle’s Dad) – This pair did extremely well in their double roles. They made the characters completely different with strong well enunciated dialogue and some fine tuneful singing.

**Samuel Collins-Webb –** (Kiki/Nikos/Grandmaster Chad)

**Thomas Hutton –** (Carlos/Professor Winthrop) – I so enjoyed these two in “There! Right There!” they were great fun and their little dance was terrific!

**Melanie West –** (Saleswoman/Whitney)

**Georgia Coney –** (Gaelen/DA Joyce Riley)

**Holly Adamson –** (Professor Pforzheimer/Stenographer)

**Megan McGuire –** (Chutney/Elle’s Mum)

**Emily Walford –** (Store Manager) - These five young ladies had well delineated characters and performed their scenes famously. Dialogue was well delivered; though I would have liked more projection from Chutney and their singing was clear and melodic. They can be assured that they supported the principals superbly adding to a stunning performance.

**H&H Girls –** This group worked tirelessly giving their absolute all to everything they did. Their verve and energy was super and it was obvious they enjoyed every moment they were on stage. They performed their numbers brilliantly and are to be commended on their commitment to the production.

**Daphney Brandt –** (Bruiser) – This little beauty was perfectly cast! She behaved so well and had the audience ooing and ahhing!

**Gordon Bird –** (Director) – assisted by **Ellen Hunter** I was so impressed with Gordon’s interpretation it brought the show to life and showcased the acting skills of his young cast; in so doing he created in them boundless energy and enthusiasm. He ensured the characters had depth rather than being frivolous caricatures and their relationships realistic and meaningful; which in turn brought dimension and understanding to the plot. His staging was superb with excellent entrance and exits which ensured the performance flowed at a great pace.

**Jack Frewin –** (Musical Director) – assisted by **Sarah Lockwood** This MD deserves much credit and praise. Diction of the whole cast was superb; I understood every word that was being sung. Not something I say very often I can tell you! He ensured the cast understood the lyrics and were therefore able to perform all the numbers knowingly with great pizzazz. Entries were confident and timings spot on.

Directing the cast from behind the scenes is no easy feat; and this task fell to the capable hands of **Lara Savory** and this she did brilliantly. She kept the band nicely under control and for the most part the balance was perfect; however there was the odd occasion when they were a little overpowering.

**Lindsay Alexander –** (Choreographer) – I absolutely loved this high octane choreography; the routines were diverse, imaginative and artistic. The cast had been drilled to perfection with every member in perfect unison. Not only this she had ensured everyone in the cast enjoyed what they were doing; creating a contagious energy that spilled into the audience.

**Karen Bird –** (Stage Manager) – this SM ran a tight ship and her **Crew** affected the changes quickly and efficiently ensuring the smooth running of the show. The cast assisted some of the time which also helped to keep the action moving.

**Patrick Naylor/Phil Gowen** – (Sound) – As I have come to expect from technicians in this venue sound was excellent. The volume of the stage microphones was just right meaning those cast members not wearing personal mics could be heard perfectly.

**Susie Williamson/Mary Tingle –** (Mic Technicians) – This duo had the mic plot off to a T and there were no missed cues.

**Matt Chishick** – (Lighting Designer) – This was a well devised plot which enhanced each scene effectively. There was a good use of colour, intimate fixed spotting and general overall flooding of the stage; creating great atmosphere. I particularly liked the flood of green for “Ireland”. The operation of this fell to **Ellen Hunter** who had everything cued to perfection.

**Cate Naylor** – (Wardrobe) – The costumes were super colourful original and befitted the action perfectly. I particularly liked Elle’s costumes each one suited her down to the ground. What a shame that on the evening of my visit the jacket to Elle’s finale suit was done up on the wrong buttons and not rectified until she the very end when she had been off stage three times. I also felt Paulette’s skirt was a tad too short; half the time it was covered by the jacket and didn’t look as though she was wearing one at all. The professor’s gowns were authentic as was Kyle’s UPS delivery outfit and I liked the orange prison uniforms.

**Amy Lockwood/Rachel Lockwood** – (Properties) – What a great job this pair had done! They had collated a wealth of props all of which was perfect for its usage. The individual scenes were well dressed with furniture and props appropriate to the action.

**Gordon Bird/Tim Howling –** (Set Design) – This simplistic set worked really well on this stage. I liked the side pieces which acted as entrances then pulled out to become the beauty parlour. It had been well constructed by **Tim Howling/Di Capel/Natalie Clarke/Sam Turner/Steve Toon/SPTYG Members**

**Mary Tingle** – (Programme) – The programme had been cleverly printed on plain pink paper to reflect the show. However it was packed with information. I was so pleased to read about the success of the group at this years’ International Youth Theatre Challenge in Prague. The cast photos were super and accompanied by bios which were great fun and gave an insight into their personalities.

Thank you

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Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13