



Society : The Sainsbury Singers
Production : Anything Goes
Date : Thursday 17th May 2018
Venue : The Hexagon Reading
Report by : Jeanette Maskell

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Show Report

Oh how I love a bit of Porter! This is one of the classics with superb music enchanting lyrics a witty script and great characters.

Unfortunately this performance was marred by poor sound which impacted on the cast; however they coped admirably and gave an energetic and entertaining presentation

Lorraine Cox – (Reno Sweeny) – As the Evangelist turned night-club singer, this young lady looked the part in every way. Her stance was stylised and in keeping with the period helping to convey the sentiments of her character. I liked the relationships she created with Billy and Moonface and her scenes with Sir Evelyn were funny and well timed. Her musical numbers were well presented with a soulful, well sung “I Get a Kick out of You” however here I would have liked more pronounced diction as I only heard; I get a kick ou of oo! That said in complete contrast she gave an upbeat and energetic rendition of “Blow Gabriel Blow” however for me her movement and singing in “Anything Goes” proved her highlight.

Stephen Cox – (Billy Crocker) – This is a challenging role requiring numerous guises and accents. As the love struck Billy Crocker who had stowed away on a ship bound for the UK in an effort to charm the lovely 'Hope Harcourt' out of the arms of her English Lord, this actor was a natural. His diction was strong and clear, and this coupled with a good singing voice, enhanced his performance greatly. I so enjoyed his duet with Hope “All through the Night”. His various disguises to avoid the ship's Purser were well contrived and he brought out the comedy to the full. His interaction with his fellow cast members was engaging at all times and I particularly enjoyed his scenes with Hope.

Helen Thomas – (Hope Harcourt) - This was a delightfully understated performance! Her movement around the stage, facial expressions and characterisation were perfect for this role. Her rapport with Billy was natural and believable and their scenes together were excellent. “All through the Night” was well sung with good expression.

Brian Bretney – (Sir Evelyn Oakleigh) – I liked everything about this actors performance. His accent (very Tally Ho!) his animated visuals his comic timing and his bearing and movement there was nothing I could fault. His scenes with Reno were so funny and this was down to his ability to play them completely straight thus bringing out the humour fully. “Let’s Misbehave” was great fun and I enjoyed this immensely.

Steve Jewell – (Moonface Martin) – Oh I could listen to this young man sing all night; he has a mellow and resonant tone and every note is effortless. Needless to say “Be like the Bluebird” was the highlight of the evening for me. His acting wasn’t always on the money; however this is a skill he will develop the more he does. Still he had a good accent with clear well projected dialogue and worked well with Bonnie Billy and Reno. His scene with Elisha was extremely well contrived and he pulled this off famously.

Louise Quelch – (Bonnie) – This young lady was brilliant; I liked her tottering walk her exaggerated hand movements and her vivid facial expression. Her character was sassy fresh and pert with a high pitched Jersey accent which was perfect for the character. However I would just say to be aware that the audience only get one chance at the dialogue being delivered and there were times when a notch or two lower would have made all the difference. I enjoyed both her numbers which were well sung and danced but my favourite was “Heaven Hop”

Emily Hiscock – (Charity)

Lucy Hutson – (Chastity)

Hannah Scarisbrick-Rowe – (Purity)

Catherine Hannan – (Virtue) – This quartet was a perfect backing for Reno and Bonnie. It was obvious they had put in a lot of hard work, and clear they were enjoying themselves. Each had their own individual character and collectively they were lively dynamic and spirited. Their dialogue was well delivered with good accents and they moved and sang with great vitality. They really came into their own in “Take Me Back to Manhattan”.

Hilary Latimer – (Mrs Harcourt) – This was a knockout performance! Her standoffish snobbish character was quite superb and her powerful expressive dialogue was delivered with an excellent accent. She swept around the stage with an air of haughty arrogance so befitting her persona and brought the stage to life every time she made an entrance.

Michael Schult – (Elisha J Whitney) – This is a character that can get lost amongst the stronger principals; not on this occasion! I so liked his performance he made a glorious drunk and he delivered his dialogue brilliantly making it sound slurred and drunken whilst enunciating every word. His timing was perfect and he made every scene he was in alive and fun

Rob Latimer – (Captain) – Although this was a minor character it was well portrayed with good well projected dialogue and an authoritative bearing. I liked his scene with Mrs Harcourt and his wedding ceremony

Katie Wise – (Purser)

Chris Thomas – (Steward) – These two had created characters true to the script. Their dialogue was clear audible and expressive. The purser had the most winning smile and animated visuals and the steward stood out as officious

Gareth Wells – (Ching)

Chris Howard – (Ling) – This pairing worked well together; however I would have liked them to have made more of their scenes and brought out more of the comedy.

Federico Donati

Joshua Bethal – (Sailors) – These two had a real naval look and feel. They moved brilliantly and their hornpipe was expertly dance.

Federico Donati – (Bishop)

Sara El-Hanfy – (Camerawoman)

Jessamy Vincent – (Reporter) – Although I haven't singled out anyone individually, they all played a major part in making this a first class production. Each made their character believable with good movement about the stage and well projected dialogue

Passengers – This ensemble supported the principals selflessly singing and dancing with great aplomb. They looked as though they were thoroughly enjoying themselves and this came over to the audience in abundance. Their entrances and exits were well controlled and they kept to their directed spacing and positioning.

Matthew Smith – (Director) – assisted by **Kazia Grainger** this was a well-directed piece of theatre which had been given a creative touch. Characters had been thought through with an emphasis on relationships within the script. Staging spacing and blocking were first rate and his direction within the confines of the cabins and brig was truly impressive. Having seen this director's work before it was then a surprise that the action lacked pace and fluidity. I am uncertain as to why this was as the cast appeared to be in control at all times and all the humour and fun were there in abundance.

Jon Brooks – (Musical Director) – This MD had spent time ensuring the cast had full understanding of the lyrics. This really enhanced the interpretation of their solos and the ensemble pieces. The chorus numbers were a triumph with some exquisite harmonies and the balance between the voices perfect; other than "Public Enemy" where there were some real tuning issues. He kept complete control over the small band (who I would like to add were outstanding) and the balance between stage and pit was spot on.

Denise Schult – (Choreographer) – Once again this young lady showed what an imaginative choreographer she is. She drills the cast to the limit and always ensures every member is step and time perfect. She is fortunate to have a talented male dancer in Federico and she utilised his expertise to devise a nice little hornpipe for him and Joshua. I was a little disappointed with tap which I felt could have been so much more exciting. Blow Gabriel Blow was the absolute highlight of the evening.

Susan Richardson – (Production Co-ordinator) – Everything for this production came together famously and that is all down to the hard work of this co-ordinator.

Kim Hollamby – (Lighting Designer) – operated by **Adrian Croton** This plot had some super atmospheric lighting. I really liked the two large lamps situated on the top walk way which when lit threw an ethereal haze over the acting area. The flooding of the stage with reds for Blow Gabriel Blow worked fabulously and the spots for the two cabins on the blacks was just right.

John Simmonds – (Stage Manager) – **Becca Simons/Jackie Stoffels** DSM's and crew **Joe Daniels/Danny Humby** This was a well-run stage with the crew changing sets quickly and efficiently. I wonder if it would have been better to play the cabin scenes and brig scene on the

main set rather than the blacks; however I'm guessing this is what the director visualised so not the SM's decision.

John Ollerenshaw – (Hexagon Sound Board) – assisted by **Sally Ollerenshaw** unfortunately on the evening of my visit the sound technicians had an absolute mare! There were missed cues crackling mics and mics left on when the actors had left the stage. All in all not very good at all

Brian Bretney – (Sound Effects) – These were all just right to enhance the action. The seagulls the ships hooter the machine gun fire all absolutely spot on.

Kazia Grant/Matthew Smith – (Props/Set) – This simple static set with its two levels worked brilliantly creating the maximum acting area and adding depth and dimension to the action. The central and side steps also gave the director plenty of scope to create interesting direction and the choreographer room to place cast members giving them space to move. Props had been well collated and appropriate for purpose.

Russell Smith – (Brig/Bunk Beds Build) – These two items had been sturdily made perfect for their usage; large enough to capture the essence of the scene yet compact and easily manoeuvrable.

Amanda Bretney/Emma Reeves – (Wardrobe Team) - These two had put together costumes that looked right for the period and suited the characters personalities exactly. The use of trousers and striped tops gave a real nautical feel to the piece. I so liked Reno's hat in the first scene it was just perfect. Such a shame she took off! Mrs Harcourt looked absolutely stunning and the Bishop's costume and the Chinese contingent both looked authentic. A particular mention for Sir Evelyn's sock garters which were brilliant

Catherine Hannan/Rachel Sargeant – (Makeup) – I know the trend is to use natural looking makeup however on this occasion I would have liked heavier more defined colour on eyes and lips. The Chinese' faces were cleverly hidden by their hats so that no additional makeup was required.

Catherine Hannan – (Hair & Wigs) – This young lady ensured that hairstyles were of the era and I especially liked the Angels.

John Jones – (Front of House Manager) – I would like to thank John for making my visit to Sainsbury Singers as pleasurable as always

Thank you

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Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13