

Nicely, Nicely does it

Eastbourne Operatic & Dramatic Society (EODS) perform GUYS & DOLLS Review by Gregory Gower

Black & White are not bad colours – but this production was the ‘Jewel in the Crown’ so many colours, they sparkled like the film “The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel!”

The heat is on in Times Square and (Lt Brannigan) Keith Smith has threatened to put (Nathan Detroit's) James Bell crap game out of business. Nathan has promised Night Club Singer (Adelaide) Claire Robinson, his fiancée of 14 years to give up gambling.

In between times.....

Nathan thinks up a ploy to win \$1,000 to secure a place for the next Crap Game against (Sky Masterson) Neil Sellman when Sky accepts a bet from Nathan regarding taking any lady to Havana. The lady in question is Sarah Brown (Nikki Leach) of the “Save-a-Soul Mission” about to close down for lack of customers.

Gareth Brighton (Nicely-Nicely) What a Nicely – Nicely touch of characterisation that Gareth made! Especially the funny walk and stance! I must admit you were one of my favourite characters and you opened the show nicely – nicely!

James Bell (Nathan Detroit) Such a strong actor portraying a devious and underhand character. I liked the way he moved from one phase of being mild and understanding to being desperately looking for that elusive venue. He almost moved me to tears in his frustration of not being able to reach his goal.

Nikki Leach (Sarah Brown) A believable ‘Save a Soul’ Mission character who transfers her curt and clipped words of authorisation to a mellow, swooning romantic softy and then changes back without any effort. Not easily done as one can get so involved with their role that losing the transition from one character trait to another can fly out of the window and be lost forever. I liked the singing – very strong!

Neil Sellman (Sky Masterson) Another strong principal and paired nicely with Nikki Leach. More or less a straight acting job with this character and judging by former parts as read in the programme I found this role for him to be a tad tame for his abilities as an actor.

Claire Robinson (Adelaide) You know how there is always one person you clap your eyes on and follow every movement, every inflection, every syllable of each word. I thought you were the “Bees’ Knees” and I sympathise with you, Nathan Detroit didn’t deserve you! Wonderful characterisation of the role plus your singing abilities, very strong voice!

Supporting cast as follows:

Crap Shooters:

Julian Message (Big Jule), David Fricker (Benny Southstreet), Stan Fillery (Rusty Charlie), Nathan Morris (Harry the Horse), James Collins (Society Max), Carl Todhunter (Benny the Greek), James Cooper (Snake Eyes), Dave Riddington (Angie the Ox), Ian Tingley (Scranton Slim), Ash Jones (Liver Lips Louie),

Mission Band:

Rebecca Bruce (General Cartwright), Michelle Eldridge (Martha), Pam Cross (Agatha), Mick Root (Corporal Calvin), Janet Jeffries, Bev Hayter.

Special mention:

Clem Jackson (Arvide) A husky soothing fatherly approach to Sarah Brown sang "More I Cannot Wish You" with a swinging lilting voice and slightly jazzed up version and would have had me dancing in the aisle had I not been sitting in the middle of a row.

Hot Box Girls:

Bonnie Poole, Paige Riddington, Nikki Brook, Natalie Harper, Rebecca Fillery, Hannah Poynter, Susie Blundell, Steph Orchard.

Cast:

Keith Smith (Lieutenant Brannigan). Kim Ramakrishnan (Broadway Beggar/ Cuban Singer).

Dance Ensemble:

Laura West (Lead Cuban Dancer), Alex Robinson (Lead Cuban Dancer/MC/Brandy Bottle Bates), Jacky Wood, Tracy Watton, Linda Harper, Theresa Hall, Mo Munday.

My congratulations go to the costume Ladies and backstage crew – where would we be without you!

Last but not least:

Andy Gill (Musical Director) and his small ensemble of musicians certainly gave the sound of a full orchestra with just the right level of sound. Thank you from the hard of hearing.

Theresa Smith (Choreographer) The result of your achievements' were witnessed by audiences throughout the week and I take my hat off to you for such a marvellous and entertaining piece of choreography and some steps performed by the cast were in some cases more difficult sequences than the normal dance routines and I was able to see how well they coped.

Nick Reynolds (Director) One could just slap Nick on the back and say 'More I Cannot Wish You' 'I'll Know' 'Guys and Dolls' 'Luck Be a Lady' 'Sit Down You're Rockin' The Boat' 'The Happy Ending'. But one has to say more for his innovative ideas for bringing to the stage at The Devonshire Park Theatre, Eastbourne such a sensational production. Keep on directing!

Overview: Everyone sung with conviction and kept up their American accents, a very important point in any American Musical.

All the musical numbers were sparkling with youthful enthusiasm and the set pieces like the fight sequel was done with precision. I felt that the number in scene 3 had me by the throat "Luck Be a Lady". I just didn't know where to look, it was sensational piece of artistry, the acrobatic movements, the energy, and timing of each individual set piece had to be spot on!

One thing did bother me – the "Save-a-Soul Mission" set piece of scenery looked a bit fragile – it wobbled a bit!