



Society : Maidenhead Operatic Society
Production : La Belle Helene
Date : 14th November 2008
Venue : Desborough Suite, Maidenhead
Report by : Steve Bold, Actg. NODA Representative, Area 14

Report

It is always a pleasure to visit the Desborough Suite, a welcoming and expansive venue. A pleasant greeting from a member of the group, and escorted to the bar for a complimentary drink. La Belle Helene was a feast of superlative singing, some of which was truly out of this world. Although I felt the overture was a little overlong and could have been cut in half. There were also occasions where due to the pitch of the singing it was difficult to hear all the pronunciation.

Along with some excellent principal performances, there were also good support from the chorus with interesting interaction and reaction to the main action. In the main the costumes were interesting, colourful and well put together, especially the goddesses and Ajax and Achilles.

A well presented programme with a delightfully interesting cover. The perspective on the pictures was excellent and gave an interesting insight into the possibilities of the show and plot. The programme detailed a good background of the crew and principal players and also included a half page on NODA, showing general information and contact details. There were a number of advertisement scattered through the programme, but these did also include information about future shows from the group and other local groups and several amusing stop action rehearsal pictures.

Juno – Cathy Brookes, Minerva – Rosie Lake, Venus – Olivia Hunt

A dulcet and vibrant start to the show from the three goddesses. Excellent singing from all three, with good movement and interaction. Nice touches with the arguments and bickering.

Helen – Liz Couper-Johnston

A professional performance, always in character and reactive to the action across the stage. Played the dotting wife, while scheming with Paris behind Menelaus' back. Superb voice and always controlled singing. A joy to watch.

Nesta – Ruth Sheppard

Some interesting asides, those quirky little looks as she has to put up with the coming and goings of Paris and Helen. Playful and fun character, bringing a comedic touch to the serious moments and background action.

Agamemnon – Arnold Page

A little reminiscent of Charles Hawtrey and Kenneth Williams from so many classic Carry On films. Quirky, slightly off the wall, but fun and well played, a good character.

Philocomus – Bob Spooner

My favourite character of the show, totally out there and fun to watch. Wonderful expressions at feeling put out or disappointed. The stand out performance.

Leona – Cat Ellis, Cressida - Charlotte Roberts

Two bright and exciting characters, almost Essex girls in some senses. Bringing life and colour to every occasion. Never afraid to show a bit of leg or have a little fun. Great performances from them both.

Paris – Steve McAdam

Although a good performance and very competent singer, I felt there could have been more character development, throwing oneself more into the part. It also seemed on occasion the costume was a little on the short side.

Menelaus – James Couper-Johnston

The classic cuckolded husband, always believing he is control when the world doesn't revolve around him. Trying to maintain an air of authority over those around him. A good relationship between Menelaus and Helen, as she gradually drifts further away from him.

Calchas – Gareth Watkins

An interesting costume, and interesting character. Desperate to please those in power, whilst trying to keep himself out of trouble. Never really getting on top or ahead of the game, always chasing the moment to fulfil his destiny.

Ajax – Mike Robinson, Achilles – Kit Hobson

Good performances from both warriors, although they did seem out of place on occasion, filling in gaps between scenes and dramatic moments.

Mercury – Paul Seddon

A significant and prominent performance, fleetingly seen, but well played.

Orestes – Laurence Cox

A confident and concise performance. Not a great deal to play with, but well done throughout.

Director - Lou Millward

A confident and well directed show, full of life and superb singing and thoroughly professional cast, obviously dedicated to their performance and clear in the direction they were aiming via the Director and the script. A great performance all round with some stand out singing performances that will take some matching. The beach costumes felt a little unnecessary for Helen and Menelaus and Paris wig seemed quite unruly.