



Society : Maidenhead Operatic Society
Production: *The Card*
Date : 21st November, 2006
Venue : The Desborough Suite, Maidenhead
Report by : Barrie Theobald, Asst. Area
Representative, Area 13

Report

In the absence of a NODA Representative for Region 14, I was delighted to accept your invitation to review this show and to renew acquaintances I met when I was your NODA Representative. The Card was a show I had often heard of but this was the first time I had had an opportunity to see it, so it was a double delight to receive your invitation. I came on your first night, and it must be said that there were several mishaps during the show that I am sure were sorted out before the end of the week. However, of course, I only had an opportunity to see your production once, and the Tuesday show certainly did not achieve the standard I remember seeing at MOS a few years ago. In several instances the cast were unable to overcome problems with radio mikes, lighting, costume and props. This was a shame, as the basis of a good show was there.

BRANDIS SAVIZON (Denry Machin) worked very hard to establish a rapport with the audience, but was severely handicapped by a radio mike that constantly flapped away from his head. This meant that we were often unable to hear either the dialogue or lyrics and I felt also worried you as you made your debut in a principal role. When changing shoes in the first kitchen scene, I couldn't help noticing that the shoes you were putting on were not in keeping with the time the piece is set. You had several quick changes which were competently executed and your pleasant singing voice came over well in your solo numbers. Your beaming smile was ever present, adding much to your characterisation and I look forward to seeing you in a future principal role.

ANDREA TUSHINGHAM (Nellie Cotterill) gave a superb interpretation of the role of the overlooked secret admirer – a portrayal that was excellent in every way. *If Only* was, for me, the high spot of the show. Congratulations.

REBEKAH FAERGEMANN (Ruth Earp) showed excellent stage presence at each appearance in her role as the 'gold digger' and delivered her musical numbers with conviction, although the 'spinning' lighting in Scene 3 (The Dancing Academy), did little to enhance the presentation of *Another Time, Another Place*.

ROSEMARY ROBERTS (Mrs. Machin) gave a warm characterisation of a mum, proud of her son's progress in life (and I loved the ever-present wash basket!)

PETER HILL (Duncalf) appeared slightly under-rehearsed and unsure of his dialogue (at one stage he appeared to be reading his lines!) perhaps this was an off-day.

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JEAN JOHNSON (Countess of Chell) Despite the programme notes, I did not have the pleasure of seeing Jean in an ‘upper crust’ role when I had the pleasure of reviewing her former SMTC appearances. However, the aristocracy obviously suits her as this was a delightful cameo role, always in character whether or not she was a focal point at the time.

PAUL SEDDON (Councillor Calvert) I was slightly disappointed with Paul’s performance, although this could possibly be attributable to the problems with sound – there were many instances when we could see your lips moving but could barely catch the dialogue/lyrics.

NATHANAEL PAGE (Parsloe)) Aply performed their cameo roles, but the lack
JENI MONEY (Mrs. Codelyn)) of radio mikes presented an imbalance
GRAHAM JOHNSTONE (Shillitoe)) when they were singing/conversing with a
) principal.

CHORUS The Chorus involvement in the show varied considerably. Their involvement in Scene 1 appeared to be quite haphazard, but this was more than compensated for by the precision we saw and heard at the Municipal Ball in *How Do*. However, they really came into their own at Llandudno, with some delightful cameo performances that captured the tongue-in-cheek lyrics of *Lock, Stock and Barrel*. (Pity we had plastic windmills in this scene, when paper ones would have been so simple to make). Act 2, Scene 3 saw the whole Company involved with *The Card* when the choreography flowed far more freely than it had in some of the earlier scenes.

PRODUCTION To facilitate the smooth-running of the show, simple reversible scenery had been utilised. Sometimes this worked, but more often than not, it made the staging slightly ‘pantomimey’. In the main, the costumes were excellent, so it was a shame when the occasional lack of attention to detail spoilt the effect that had been so painstakingly researched. For instance, the show was set at a time when everyone venturing outside their homes would have covered their heads with hats, caps or scarves etc. I have mentioned Denry’s shoes above, and I also noticed his lack of white gloves and the wearing of a black tie with tails. Both lighting and sound were poor. We frequently saw dark areas on stage that should have been illuminated and throughout the report there has been mention of the failure of the sound equipment. Indeed, at one stage I wondered whether you had, perhaps, not had time for a proper technical rehearsal! In mitigation, of course, I am aware that cast do not always position themselves correctly!! Makeup appeared adequate, and I made a special note in my programme complimenting the ladies on their hair styles at the ball. Rosemary and Derek Roberts are to be congratulated on the delightful design of the programme that included such interesting historical information and pictures. I do hope you submitted copies for the Regional/National competitions.

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TIM CRUMPER (Musical Director) has vast experience locally in this role, but, sadly during this performance he allowed the musicians to completely overwhelm the vocalists. Possibly he, too, had problems due to the varying sound levels we experienced.

LUKE WESTON (Director) had a tough job directing a show that is rarely performed, and thus has little provenance on which to base his interpretation of the script. I am sure he was most disappointed with the many (avoidable) mishaps that occurred during the performance I attended. I am sure, too, that most of these were sorted out as the week progressed.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to see a show that I had heard of but had, hitherto, not caught up with. I have no doubt that you, too, were a little concerned with the first night's performance, but, of course, that was the one I saw and the one I have to report on. My thanks, too, to Ian and all your Front of House team who welcomed Henry and I and so generously entertained us. I wish you all a very Happy New Year and send you best wishes for your forthcoming productions during 2007.

Barrie Theobald.
Asst. Area Representative, Area 13