



Society : YOUNG KVODS
Production : "BUGSY MALONE"
Date : 23 July 2011
Venue : Kingston Grammar School
Report by : Stephen Macvicar

Report

Thank you very much for inviting me to Young KVODS production of one of my favourite musicals "Bugsy Malone" recently at the Kingston Grammar School. Thanks also to your front of house staff for making me welcome at the performance and to Julie Mills for making the ticket arrangements.

Brief Synopsis

It is New York, 1929 and a war rages between two rival gangsters, Fat Sam and Dandy Dan. Dan is in possession of a new and deadly weapon, the dreaded 'splurge gun'. As the splurge flies, Bugsy Malone, an all-round nice guy, falls for Blousey Brown, a singer at Fat Sam's speakeasy. His designs on her are disrupted by the seductive songstress Tallulah - who wants Bugsy for herself. How is Bugsy to get the girl and help Fat Sam defend his business against the deadly Dan and his dastardly tricks? Bugsy has a cast of larger than life characters placed in a mobster era, armed with splurge instead of bullets and belting out some superb songs.

Short Report for NODA London Magazine and NODA website

Fun was the name of the game in this latest offering from Young KVODS. A highly versatile set was constructed to allow all the scenes to flow as well as possible without requiring the crew to physically move too much furniture. We were entertained by some nicely judged and relaxed performances from some very young performers. In addition, KVODS constructed some fake cars and introduced the mandatory splurge guns which worked to great effect.

It is such a pity that other societies, be they youth or senior groups, have not chosen to indulge their actors in this fantastic romp. This show has been synonymous with kids playing adults since the fantastic Alan Parker film of 1976 however it also lends itself beautifully to adults 'hamming up' the action in a similar way to pantomime. In this youth production we had a variety of young ladies who were playing male hoods, cops, boxers and bums and it added to the overall comedy.

The intriguing 1920's set, with the action being performed on split levels, added much stage interest. On view was a mixture of offices, booths, street scenes and of course the Speakeasy as playing areas. It was a terrific set backed up by a hard working cast and crew of scene changers and really added much to the production visually. Scene changes were slick as they had to be with so many. The amount of scenes in this show and the beauty of a set like this means meant that the pace could be observed and maintained. Congratulations to Helen O'Loughlin and her hard working crew, design and construction team. To augment the impressive set and the atmosphere created, props and costumes have to be authentic. I thought your props and your costumes were fabulous. Nothing was left out as I took note of fake cars, trellises, assorted furniture and phones etc. It was very amusing to see these young actors dressed up in a variety of adult society clothes. Hats in particular made me chuckle, especially the young lady in a very fetching turban style dress hat. KVODS is very

lucky to have such a great band of helpers who contribute in many ways and they should never be taken for granted.

What I really liked about this production was the fact that everybody played it with a smile on their face and was apparently having fun. There was a really nice atmosphere and nobody was taking themselves at all seriously. I'm sure this is due in no small part to your talented Production Team of Jeff Raggett as Director, Jon Mizler as Musical Director and Rachael King as Choreographer. No doubt wholeheartedly backed up by Nick Wale as Producer and Julie Mills as Production Assistant. Lighting and Sound were in the safe hands of Daniel Dar-Nell and Darren Lord respectively.

The production numbers were strong with none better than 'We Could Have Been Anything that We'd Wanted to be', 'Bad Guys', 'So You Wanna be a Boxer' and the final 'You Give a Little Love'. Congratulations to the whole cast for putting so much effort into these numbers. The only slight negative about this show and it was a problem with the Alan Parker film is that the dialogue is so obviously adult and slick it can appear strange to be coming out of the mouths of minors. It is very hard for anybody to convey that worldly, sharp banter that epitomises these characters, alongside strong accents in many cases, let alone for a teenager performer. Having said that I thought the whole on-stage talent coped remarkably well.

This was a true ensemble production as everyone had one or multiple parts. The assortment of hoods and goons were especially inept and drew bags of comedy from their situations. The showgirls and various other sideshows added the required glamour and subtlety. Everyone backed up the main principals royally and I have written a few individual notes on the lead principals who all had challenging and diverse parts;

Bugsy Malone – Zac Trevitt – Zac looked well groomed and coped well with the demanding lib that this character has to contend with. We were with his trials and tribulations throughout

Fat Sam Stacetto – Lorenzo Stylianou – A huge vote of congratulations to Lorenzo for shaping this lovable bad guy and keeping both the accent and mannerisms from slipping at any point

Dandy Dan – Jamie Harris-Knapp – I thought Jamie did a great job. His characterisation was slick and smooth

Fizzy – Elijah Trevitt – Elijah was suitably mellow in the role. There is no doubt that his song 'Tomorrow' was very poignant and his character engendered sympathy

Blousey Brown – Phoebe Stayt – Blousey is a bit of a depressing role but I liked what Phoebe did with the character, looking extremely cool and relaxed for one so relatively inexperienced. Phoebe's rendition of 'Ordinary Fool' was excellent – a very strong all round performance

Tallulah – Eloise Rudkin – This was a strong and confident portrayal of the famous showgirl by Eloise who looked to be relishing the role

Other characters such as Fizzy's Dancer/Lena (Zoe Bruton), Smolksy (Armelinda Beqiraj), O'Dreary (Amy Longden-Rogers), Leroy (Zach Wright) and Cagey Joe (Bailey Bruton) provided excellent support and conveyed strong character performances. Additionally the respective gangs of Fat Sam and Dandy Dan provided much of the humour throughout the evening. Congratulations to Knuckles (Kiran Dasani), Ritzy (the busy Bailey Bruton), Snake Eyes (Oliver Swann), Louis (Sam Berry), Bronx Charlie (Giorgio Cavaciuti), Doodles (Daisy Johnson), Laughing Boy (Matthew Lawn), Yonkers (Loredana Cavaciuti) and Benny Lee (the extremely busy (Zoe Bruton).

The souvenir programme had a good layout and there was plenty of interesting society reading to be done. The short biogs are always very welcome as it shows the relevant experience and growth of performers.

Once again thank you for inviting me to the Kingston Grammar School and best wishes for your next productions in 2012.

I look forward to seeing you again soon and if I can be of any assistance at any time, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kindest Regards

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