



teur theatre

Society : Panda Players
Production : Kipps The Musical
Date : 11 March 2022
Venue : The Elgiva
Report by : Judith Watsham

Show Report

Thank you for inviting me to see your latest production. Isn't it great to be back on stage after exactly 2 years!

I think that The Pandas, like so many other groups, are to be roundly congratulated on putting on such an ambitious show – you must have had so many Covid-related absentees during rehearsals, I am sure; I know of other groups who had these problems, one or two only achieving full attendance after get-in. Very well done to you all.

Thank you for your warm welcome and hospitality David; I would have liked the opportunity to talk to Barry Dell, your director, but as I spotted him on stage making up the numbers in the Ensemble, I realised that this would not be possible on this occasion.

An excellent programme again from Martiarts Design (aka David Martin I think). Do enter it for next year's NODA London Programme Award, won't you? Also, the Poster perhaps? Details and entry forms on the NODA London website and entries can be submitted at any time.

Barry's direction was sure and Amber Dye's choreography was very good. I particularly liked the choreography set for Lady Punnet's Garden Party which ended Act I – everyone was spot on with their moves.

MD Peter Allanson had obviously worked you all very hard, there were some lovely harmonies too. Both the ensemble singing and the small band were excellent. The ensemble singing of *If the Rain's Got to Fall* was especially good with excellent diction from everyone involved.

Your SM, Peter Threadgold, and his team managed the scene changes smoothly. With no flats or what I would term conventional scenery of course but quite a lot of props items to be set, a bar, a maypole, tables and chairs to mention just a few.

Props were the responsibility of Martin Beard and his assistant Lydia Ridout. On the whole these were excellent and set the scenes well. However, I felt the tables in the bar were a tad too modern, but I do know that wing space is limited in this venue! Something in a much darker wood, not as flimsy looking, would have been more appropriate perhaps?

On the subject of the set: I thought you made the right decision, presumably Barry (?) not to attempt actual conventional scenery as there were some 14 different scenes. I just wondered why you could only project the seascape on to half the cyc? Presumably Les Brewer, your lighting designer, was unable to achieve the required effects with the equipment you had available? Whatever the reason, it did look a bit odd when characters were on the Pier and the Cyc was half sea and sky and half a sort of brown blur. If there was a reason for this, I am sorry, but it escaped me!

Sound, Roger Knight and Christian Ashby, was good at all times.

Costumes, Janice Suter you did an excellent job with these, I particularly liked the sunshiny yellow outfits for the Act I finale! However, I was not sure that some of Ann's outfits were totally appropriate either for her or for the period. In particular her wedding dress style and skirt length. I was surprised that Kipps did not wear a

morning suit in *Flash, Bang, Wallop!* though as it is mentioned in his song! Only my opinion but I thought he should have worn a jacket.

Olivia Dale and Sarah Walker did very well on the make up front too but Ann's hairstyle in the wedding scene was not really in period.

Now, to the cast and your performances. This show has a large named cast as there are several 'bit' parts and all of you performed well, both in the small named roles and when singing and dancing in the ensemble. For this reason, I will mention you all by name for once! So, in programme order then:

Matt Winter's Arthur Kipps moved and sang well. *Pick Out a Simple Tune* was lively and extremely well performed. Matt, you were believable in the role and in character all the time.

Amber Dye as Ann Pornick also sang and acted well. Amber, you are to be congratulated on maintaining your 'common' accent when singing – an ability that not everyone in roles such as this (where the audience needs to believe in the character's background) can manage with the success that you exhibited.

I note from the programme that Ben Ward doubled with Beau Dunsford as Young Arthur, also appearing in the ensemble. I saw Beau and you played the part very believably; I am quite sure that Ben acquitted himself well too.

Sienna Winter played Young Ann well and also appeared in several scenes. Well done, Sienna.

Kipps' Aunt and Uncle, Pam Peel and Des Fahy, filled their small roles well.

David Lewis, you were not quite as fierce as you might have been I think as the overbearing Mr Shalford but you acted the part well.

David Mundy looked suitably grave as Carshot and you doubled the small part of the architect Mr Maxwell.

Ann's brother, Sid Pornick was very well played by Kristian Price – you really inhabited this part, Kristian!

The two other apprentices in Shalford's Bazaar Drew Cowburn and Noah Smith looked just right in their roles and performed well.

The part of Flo Evans was shared by Sophie Dell and Yvonne Osborne. I saw the latter in the role and I must say I was very impressed by your performance Yvonne, in character all the time and your singing voice is excellent as is your acting. Our President, Pam Armstrong, saw Sophie in the part and she has made the following comment:

"Sophie played Flo very well and gave a very mature and competent and believable performance"

I did see Sophie of course in the small part of Miss Ross – this part was played by ensemble member Marion Raeburn-James when Sophie appeared as Flo.

Sophie and Yvonne, I think that both of you showed great promise and I am looking forward to seeing you perform in major adult roles in the future.

Joanne Day was a really excellent Helen Walsingham; we could really believe in your role of a 'classy and beautiful' girl. Not only was your singing first class but you were totally in character throughout and managed to indicate that you did not really agree with your family's scheme to get hold of Kipps' fortune in a very subtle and understated way which was totally appropriate for your character.

Another top performance came from Trish Lewis as Mrs Walsingham – you too fitted the role well.

Con man James Walsingham was suitably sleazily played by Robin Scarborough- your 'playing' at the musical evening was very funny and well-acted.

Imogen Osborne gave a superb performance as wealthy Lady Punnet – totally in character all the time. You have the ability to light up the stage whenever you appear Imogen – an excellent portrayal.

Kei Xiu Sones gave a lively performance as young Hayes – I loved the rose between your teeth!

Another person who brought added life to the show and seemed to lift everyone's performance was that of Kevin Vaughan-Smith as Chitterlow. Kevin, you were totally believable in the role – an excellent portrayal.

Laurence Singer added gravitas to the part of Lady Punnet's butler and brought bossiness (Hold It ..) to the vital role of the photographer in *Flash Bang, Wallop!*

Frances Sones and Jo Wilson as wealthy friends of Lady Punnet looked completely right in their roles and, as is the case with other cast members previously mentioned, both of you moved and sang well.

Hannah England in the small role of Sid's fiancée was suitably young and sweet and doubled another small role – that of a waitress.

Michael Taylor was first of all seen briefly as a policeman and then as an efficient barman in all the scenes set in *The Hope and Anchor*.

Finally, I just want to add that all members of your large cast managed the exits and entrances well; all of you in the relevant character the entire time too. This was a very enjoyable evening and I want to wish you well for next year's production of *The Addams Family*.

Judith Watsham

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