



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Panda Players
Production : Working – A Musical
Date : 13 July 2018
Venue : Hyde Heath Village Hall
Report by : Judith Watsham

Show Report

Thank you for your warm welcome David and Helen and also for the refreshments on such a hot evening.

This show had, in my opinion, similarities to a revue, inasmuch as there was no storyline and all the cast had to play two, three or even four different roles. There was, therefore, no opportunity for any of you to develop your character; it takes skill to switch seamlessly as you all did in this show. Well done to every one of you for achieving this as well as you did. Instead of a couple of hours to build up a believable persona you had just a couple of minutes to establish a very definite character.

Every one of you told your stories well, showing off subtle nuances in what were very ordinary, even humdrum lives. Your extremely long speeches were word perfect and if there was an odd stumble you covered it so well that I was not sure if you had a problem with the lines or not.

You interacted very well with each other when necessary too, especially Stephanie Singer in the opening number, so that Janice Suter's choreography and David Martin's direction used the small stage to the full. Some entrances through the audience worked well too.

MD Drew Cowburn had, I thought, worked you all hard to achieve the musical standards you reached – again very well done to all concerned.

The technical aspects, sound (David Martin) and lights (Chris Saxton and Barry Titchen) were fine but I was not sure of the value of the opening sequence and the video. This, it has to be said, was firstly because I could not hear the off-stage lines clearly and secondly I could not see the video screen which was small and sited fairly low. I did have some rather tall people in front of me though and I was seated towards the back. Possibly those in the front seats saw it.

Helen Turner's costumes were very good in that they reflected your characters in such a way that they told the audience a lot about you before you spoke or sang. We knew just who you were and what you were doing and the props all accentuated this.

Your small crew under stage manager Lauren Robson made the few required changes efficiently, aided by the cast when necessary. I have staged managed a small show at this venue and I appreciate its limitations believe me, especially the entrance from the kitchen.

Most of you maintained your American accents well but I noticed that some found it harder to sustain the drawl – vowels got rather anglicised at times – but I will refrain from mentioning any names. I am sure you know who you are.

Jim Moorcroft's Ironworker was very well performed, and Stephanie Singer's teacher was a delight with excellent characterisation. James Yank's trucker was another well sung and acted number.

Rachel Jones shone as the prostitute, but it was her performance as the waitress that showcased her excellent singing voice and acting abilities.

Neil Goulder's care worker was sensitively performed and the duet with Laura Barrett, *A Very Good Day* was well sung by both of you.

I loved your facial expressions Laurence as the old retiree and you put the number *Joe* over very well.

Alex Bree inevitably had all the young parts from a fast food worker in his first job to a brash salesman. You gave us good characterisations Alex but watch your diction and projection so that we hear every word clearly.

Katy Devine sang and acted well especially as the receptionist and Theresa Doughty's millworker really expressed the sheer mind-blowing boredom of the job.

Margaret Joyce put over the minutiae of a housewife's life with great feeling and *Just a Housewife* was very well sung and acted.

This was an odd piece to choose but I know that the Pandas like to go off piste regularly!

Congratulations on giving your audience a most entertaining evening.

Judith Watsham
Regional Rep NODA London 11 and 11A