

Chesham Musical Theatre Company  
South Pacific  
Rodgers & Hammerstein  
28<sup>th</sup> April 2005  
The New Elgiva Theatre Chesham  
Stephen Jarrett support area rep for 11 & 11A

### **An overview**

One of your members said to me, "How can you go to see the same over and over again and still be objective and keep your fresh approach?"

Well you have to love musicals and you in this case you have love Rodgers and Hammerstein and I do – I really do!

This is for me what theatre is really about pure escapism. Where else can you live your life by singing to each other – you'd be arrested and sent to Colney Hatch if you did this anywhere but on stage.

So thank you for inviting me in John's absence.

### **Expectations**

I am a purist when it comes to Rodgers and Hammerstein – I love the changing colours in the original film to indicate love, mystery and fun.

This does require pace, energy and attack and it can be a very long show – too long!

Strong characters and good accents – especially the American ones, which can be awful and great music and singing with, appropriate choreography. Good costumes and set are pre-requisite.

### **Front of house**

A nice, friendly welcome.

### **Programme**

A great Programme beautifully printed and laid out with everything in it you could possibly want – very professional.

## **Setting and Staging**

The set was wonderful. The turning stage of the Les Miserable type set was truly inspired. This helped the linking of scenes and pace of the whole show and how you rehearsed it, I have no idea, and how you planned the movement is equally baffling. However this was the best and most innovative set I have seen.

The only slight problem was that it rocked from side to side when dancing on it and this created a wobble effect, which I am sure, must have made things more difficult for the actors.

The backdrops were terrific too and the whole ambience that the set created was wonderful. I will ask John to put the set forward for a NODA award – whether you win or not is up to the NODA committee but it deserves a special mention and I hope you have some photos of it, or even some video footage purely to show the set in motion, of course!

## **Music**

The music was wonderful too and I cannot praise your musical director enough. She not only coped with being in the pit which must have been hot and cramped but also with using a video link to a screen for the actors to use on stage – how professional.

## **Sound & Lights**

Lovely effects and use of the traditional lighting from the film and great sound effects too, well balanced and the volumes spot on and they even came from the sides of the stage. Well done excellent technically and added to the visual spectacular that we got.

## **Costumes**

Were ok - there were too many modern touches and too much denim. Most of the costumes could be worn today – even the girl's shorts were at least 20 years too modern.

Having said this there were colourful, bright and coordinated and added to the visual spectacular.

## **Voices**

In general terms the pitch tone and volumes were good, as were the accents. There were one or two actors whose accents slipped from east coast to west or from New York to Texas during a sentence or song, but a very good attempt.

What you must watch with accents and again one or two fell into this trap is that the speed of delivery and the accent combined to become slightly gabbled or lacking in enunciation and diction. Sometimes we lost what was being said.

This was especially true of those who chose a southern accent.

## **Characterisation**

The Characters were set early and well in most cases and stayed true throughout – I was particularly impressed with the way you showed some of the emotions needed as it is easy for a show like this to move towards farce, but you controlled this very well and despite the fact that we all knew the story some of the audience were in tears at the poignant moments.

## **Choreography**

Was good, with some stretching but not over-whelming routines. You moved the cast well, used the space well, and kept the choreography interesting and lively.

One thing which stood out – and I do not know how you did this better, was that some of the cast were clearly good or even great dancers and some found it too much. You did try to hide them at the back but they still stood out amongst some very talented dancers and this includes some of the boys who could clearly move very well.

## **Direction**

Was excellent and this director really understood Rodgers and Hammerstein and how to get everything from the cast. Short of re-casting in one or two areas, you managed to get the most and best out of everyone and this was the best production of South Pacific, I have seen as NODA rep. I never go back stage to see directors or cast – but on Thursday I did.

If I had a magic wand and you asked me to nit-pick as to areas where you could improve for future productions, I would have lowered the age of the cast – especially the chorus. Most should have been in their late teens or twenties. I suspect they were a little older than that. An alternative is find productions where the ages are right.

I also feel that the choreography could have been more innovative and stretching in places. I do not know for certain whether this was the limitation of the cast or choreographers or just down to the amount of work you had to do with such a large cast in a short space of time on a stage that you had not rehearsed on more than a couple of times? But I have seen better, both from you and other societies.

### **Cast Notes**

Jo Wilson as Nellie was wonderful, her singing and acting was excellent and she delivered this stretching role really well. My only criticism of Jo was her accent was at the top end of the high pitch scale for too long and eventually it grated on the audience a little. I am sure she could have found a wider deeper range to use especially on the spoken lines.

Paul Woodstock was terrific as Emile and showed passion and emotion and an excellent singing voice. When he used to be an audience member all those years ago watching me and my friends on stage, I always said he could and should tread the boards and everything I have seen him do has proved this to me again and again. Well done Paul this was a superb all round performance.

Again just watch the accent as on just the odd occasion or word, you had slipped the border into Germany.

Niki Hall as Bloody Mary was also fantastic and her accent was wonderful throughout as was her singing.

The Chorus's were lovely and sang and danced really well and added to this wonderful show, well done to all.

I always try to pick out a few cameo roles that shone through and you had several.

The children Zoe Thompson and Oliver Neves were just brilliant as was Rebecca Jacob who showed maturity in this role well above her age.

Mick Owens as Luther was good too and added to the humour and energy.

I thought that Paul Neves as the Commander was terrific and his character was spot on, he really lifted this performance up and made it stand out.

But my favourite two cameo roles were Peter Broom as Stewpot and Peter Jeffrey as the Professor. They clearly enjoyed every minute of being on stage, acted off, danced really well and sang exceptionally well. They lifted everything they did with energy and enthusiasm. Well-done guys

### **Summary & Conclusion**

This was a great show and I loved it – well done to everyone concerned – I can't wait for the next one!

Thank you for inviting me.

Stephen Jarrett