

BROS Theatre Company

Divorce Me Darling! • October 2000 • Hampton Hill Playhouse

REVIEW

Naughty but still Nice, the gels desperately seeking the 'boyfriend' in 1926 return to Nice ten years later sadder, wiser and slightly disillusioned.

Sandy Wilson's Divorce Me Darling! was given a lively production co-directed by Elizabeth Ross, Melanie Edwards (who also choreographed the show) and musically directed by Carole Smith and Terry Saunders for BROS Theatre Company at Hampton Hill Playhouse last week.

Polly (Ruth Saunders) and her ex-school chums Fay, Nancy and Dulcie arrive at the Hotel Paradis in Nice and is soon musically asking 'Whatever Happened to Love?' with Helen Donald, Janet Simpson and Lizzie Brignall tunefully lamenting with her.

Mme Dubonnet aka Madame K, aka Claire Henderson Roe makes an impressive, dramatic entrance swathed in black sequins and generous ermine trimmings, demanding 'Lights! Music!' and later extols the virtues of being blonde, or maybe the vices, in 'Blondes For Danger'.

In between times Health & Beauty girls in charge of the formidable Lady Brockhurst (Beryl Yorath) sing of the joys of Nature while John Pyle's Lord B lusts and leers at the delectable 'chums'.

There are hints of intrigues as Polly dallies with her chum Maisie's husband, the suave Bobbie, played with oily urbanity by Bryan Cardus.

Misunderstandings abound. Tara O'Sullivan's Maisie is suspicious. So too is Polly's other half, the Hon Tony Brockhurst played as an upper class twit by Hamilton Faber to the manner born, but eventually, a few sub-plots later, they all get 'Together Again', their marital problems cured by a judicious dose of jealousy and a challenge to 'Divorce Me Darling!'

I particularly enjoyed Sheila Fitzgerald's Hortense, receptionist at the Hotel du Paradis and her romance with the manager, M Gaston, given a smooth performance by Wesley Henderson Roe, and there was a feisty performance from Julie Thomas as Hannah who, desperate to escape her single state, avidly snaps up Paul Turnbull's ever-so-foppish Sir Freddy. Their 'You're Absolutely Me' number was a highlight of the evening.

An attractive stage design by Lizzy Ross and Mike Bradbury placed the band centre stage which mostly worked well, except in the final numbers when the large cast seemed to have problems with the choreography.

Written in the 60's, Sandy Wilson's retrospective look at the 30's, part pastiche, part send-up was engaging and funny but it lacked the evergreen charm of The Boy Friend.

Jenny Scott
Richmond & Twickenham Times
