

In The Mood • April 2001 • Hampton Hill Playhouse

REVIEW

If sheer energy and enthusiasm were the sole criteria for a successful musical show, then Barnes and Richmond Operatic Society's *In the Mood* at Hampton Hill Playhouse would have been a sure-fire winner.

But BROS had very much more to offer in an evening that was mostly nostalgic, but spared a nod towards the end of the 20th century.

Directors Alison Tichmarsh and Debbie McDowell put together a sequence of numbers that ranged from Broadway shoes (sic) to Viennese operetta and from slinky Latin American rhythms to jazz and rock 'n' roll - and it worked superbly, sweeping along a packed house on a tide of great tunes and infectious good nature.

In a programme of little more than two dozen items, I can do little more than comment on a few that caught my imagination.

Three medleys - of songs associated with Grace Fields and The Andrews Sisters and of the music of Irving Berlin - caught the several styles memorably, and there was a delightful performance of *Begin The Beguine*.

And here is where I voice a slight niggle - there was no identification in the programme of who was singing what, which is taking egalitarianism a touch too far, I think.

A rather bigger disappointment was the excessive speed adopted by musical director Mike Carver for at least three of the faster numbers.

I did not expect a musician of his calibre to confuse speed with pace.

I did enjoy the comedy of *Old Folks* and *Bidin' My Time*, while the tap routine in *Chattanooga Choo Choo* was exhilarating and *All That Jazz* was delivered with real punch.

The finale, apart from the over-amplification, really did bring the house down.

This was a great showcase for the talents available to BROS and demonstrated just how they are able to mount such exciting full-scale musical productions.

George Allan
Middlesex Chronicle

Oldies and the not-so-old were taken on a nostalgia trip by directors Alison Titchmarsh and Debbie McDowell during BROS Theatre Company's *In the Mood* at the Hampton Hill Playhouse last week with an upbeat celebration of song and dance from the Wild West to the end of the 20th century, musically directed by Mike Carver.

First there was an explosion of gingham and Levis in 'The Farmer and the Cowman', close harmony in 'Bidin' My Time' and many other American showstoppers.

Then we moved back to the Blitz with sirens wailing, gunfire, and the crunch of fallen bombs before the suave radio announcer diverted wartime Brits with Henry Hall's Guest Night, Vera Lynn, and Britain's answer to the Andrews sisters crooned while khaki-clad men and women boogied to 'In the Mood' before civilians, servicemen and women sang of their 'London Pride'.

Everything changed after the interval when men in penguin suits and glamorous women in black and silver raised their glasses to 'The Night They Invented Champagne' and beer mugs for 'Drink, Drink, Drink'.

From the girls there was a witty 'I Feel Pretty', a starry backdrop for an Irving Berlin Medley with swooningly romantic dance beautifully performed in 'Let's Face the Music' and 'Cheek to Cheek'.

Another 'mood' change came as sizzingly sexy, fishnet stockinged girls gave us a sensational 'All The Jazz'.

High kicking wrinklies sang 'If you want to see 'Old Folks' you're in the wrong hall tonight' before a sophisticated gent gave a magical interpretation of Coward's 'The Party's Over Now'.

Finally the whole company, led by a leather-clad mover and shaker brought the house down in 'Let Me Entertain You' and 'Millennium'. It was a great trip from, as you might say, Little Rock to Rock and Roll.

Jenny Scott
Richmond & Twickenham Times
