

Curtains

BROS Theatre Co

Hampton Hill Playhouse
11 October 2012

With a billing as a 'Musical Comedy Whodunit' from the creators of Cabaret and Chicago and performed by BROS, it is not surprising that Curtains was a sell-out show at the Hampton Hill Playhouse and deservedly so.

Stylishly directed and ingeniously designed by Wesley Henderson Roe with choreography by Jennifer Wettone, this was a great introduction for many to this musical send up of the genre of backstage murder mysteries, which has yet to be performed on the West End stage.

As with many BROS shows, one of the joys of this production was the ensemble. The numbers for the full company were outstanding both vocally and choreographically, especially in Act I, 'The Woman's Dead' and 'In the same Boat' in the second Act – complex music, immaculately sung, together with some very smart and slick dance routines.

As in 'Kiss me Kate' and 'Noises Off' we are treated to both to backstage and on stage action. The transmission between the two sets was well managed, with the help of two 'character' stagehands, Berni Messenger and Ian Nethersell, and the changes of scene meshed well.

In the stage show, the leading lady dies during the curtain call, the production gets bad reviews and this leads to a repositioning of the cast and show's writers and producers with the lyricist being pressed into service to replace the now deceased lead. Cue the entry of the excellent Andy Clarke as the stage-struck detective in charge of the investigation who immediately takes over the production, falls in love with one of the actresses, finally several murders on, solves the mystery (and gets his girl!). As the object of his affections, Aggie Holland sang delightfully but her portrait of the young girl in her first production was slightly marred by a tendency to gabble in the dialogue.

There was fine singing from Nick Moorhead and Tracy Sorgiovanni as the show's composer and lyricist – the most 'normal' and believable characters in the mix. Marc Batten enjoyed himself as the camp English director, who was continually overruled by the detective. Clair Jardella was formidable as the producer and ultimate antithesis of 'Mrs. Worthington', whilst Bonnie Allen, the daughter who changed her name to 'Bambi' 'because her mother was shot', put over her lines tellingly and well.

Of course all ends happily; the baddy get his comeuppance, but please don't shoot all critics! This was another great show from BROS and a thoroughly enjoyable evening. Congratulations to all involved.

Marie Stoakes

ArtsRichmond