

Sardines

"This is my first visit to Richmond Theatre and my first BROS show, but I'm hoping it won't be my last. I was humming the 'big numbers' the whole train journey home"

For the full review, click [here](#).

Mark Aspen

"As BROS's glittering anniversary offering, director Deb McDowell brings a slickly oiled production to the well-oiled party that is *High Society*, ensuring that true love really can run smooth."

For the full review, click [here](#).

Surrey Comet

"I spoke to a few of the audience members after the show: 'Wow! What a triumphant return of the BROS Theatre Company!', 'All that time and effort putting the show on shone through, in every single aspect of the evening!'. 'I'm going to book another ticket!'."

For the full review, click [here](#).

Essential Surrey

"Altogether a highly pleasurable evening."

For the full review, click [here](#).

NODA review

It was a pleasure to have returned and seen BROS Theatre Company perform again – this time at the wonderful Richmond Theatre. Many thanks to Mathew Madeley for both the kind invitation and organising tickets to this performance. Apologies for my 'chopping and changing' on attendance dates Mathew!

This show has a long and interesting history. It originated in 1938 when a successful play 'The Philadelphia Story', starring Katharine Hepburn, came to Broadway. This was adapted into the 1956 film 'High Society' with Grace Kelly, Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra, with music by Cole Porter. The play and film were then adapted by Arthur Kopit into a stage musical, 'High Society' which opened on Broadway in 1998, with the action moving from Philadelphia to Oyster Bay, Long Island.

The story centers on Tracy Lord, a pretentious socialite on the day before her second wedding to George Kitteridge. When her ex-husband C.K. Dexter Haven arrives with the news that he has invited two reporters to cover the wedding, to prevent the publication of a scandalous article about Tracy's father, then events take an unexpected turn.

Congratulations must go to Deb McDowell who, as Director, was responsible for the overall direction and success of 'High Society'. With a magnificent location, and huge audiences to please, Deb was certainly under increased pressure 'to deliver' an excellent show. Amateur dramatics doesn't always enjoy a good reputation and stereotypes abound. This was, however, one of the clearest examples I've witnessed where this often perceived difference was negligible at best. In every aspect this was a wonderful production from a top-quality cast who'd been exceptionally well directed.

Janet Simpson, Musical Director, assisted by Carole Smith, led a tight and well-rehearsed ten-piece band providing first-class musical support throughout. Whilst there were a few initial occasions where the band overshadowed the vocals this was quickly corrected and for the most part the level and balance were ideal.

Jen Moorhead brought her extensive experience as Choreographer to this production and ensured it was both lively and appropriate for the time. All dance/movement simply flowed and appeared both natural and effortless. This, of course, is far from the truth with such precision only being achieved after hours of rehearsal time and strict attention to detail.

Heather Stockwell gave a fantastic performance as the pretentious socialite Tracy Lord. Both looking and sounding the part, Heather had a strong stage presence and was a delight to watch. Her vocal

skills were excellent and she immediately demonstrated these in “High Society” and “Ridin’ High”.

For me, at least, ‘I Love Paris’ and ‘True Love’ were simply lovely to hear and certainly the numbers I most enjoyed. This was an all-round classy performance and exactly what this show required.

Having previously enjoyed his fabulous performance as Jerry Travers in ‘Top Hat’, it was a pleasure to have seen Nick Moorhead performing again – this time as Tracy’s ex-husband C.K. Dexter Haven. Nick’s dancing and vocal skills are beyond question and this was yet another fabulous role. A very well-judged performance that exhibited both charm and panache. The duet ‘Little One’, with Dinah, was terrific but it was ‘Once Upon a Time’ where Nick excelled. Rebecca Nardin was fabulous as Dinah Lord, Tracy’s little sister, and seemed to have so much fun in this role. The duets ‘Little One’, with Dexter, and ‘I Love Paris’ with Tracy were both excellent. With great stage presence, and strong delivery throughout, I feel certain Rebecca will ultimately develop into a wonderful leading lady.

Uncle Willie was played with both humour, and a certain amount of mischief, by Carl Smith. This is a fabulous role to undertake and a performance I certainly enjoyed watching. ‘I’m Getting Myself Ready for You’ was terrific but it was ‘Say it With Gin’ that the audience simply loved.

Jacob Botha (Mike Connor) and Bex Wood (Liz Imbrie) both gave excellent performances as the society magazine reporters sent to cover Tracy and George’s wedding. Jacob and Bex worked very well together in these key roles. ‘You’re Sensational’ and ‘It’s All Right with Me’ were opportunities for Jacob to demonstrate his vocal skills and he certainly did just this. Bex excelled in ‘I’m Getting Myself Ready for You’ and the lovely ‘He’s a Right Guy’ but it was the duet with Jacob, ‘Who Wants To Be a Millionaire’, that was fabulous.

Jason Thomas was well cast as George Kittredge and demonstrated a rich voice, and some nifty footwork, in ‘I Worship You’. This was a solid performance in a challenging role. Rachel Williams performed well in the cameo role of Margaret Lord. Solid acting and characterisation throughout. The role of Seth Lord, Tracy’s real father, was filled by Martin Wilcox who did well and brought some additional humour in the role.

Louise Ellard-Turnbull, Aggie Holland, Mathew Madeley, Chris Nash, Georgina Skinner, Arran Southern, John Paul Sutherland and Karen Swift were excellent as the eight Singing Servants. Immaculately dressed, and demonstrating some lovely vocals/harmonies, they certainly added to the overall show. Indeed, they were highly effective in helping to distract the audience during scene changes and ensure seamless transitions in the show. A very clever piece of direction.

Faye Brann, Laura Crowley, Kathryn Field, Lucinda Hennessy, Juliet Manners and Gemma Melhuish were excellent as the six featured dancers. Greatly adding to the show’s glamour, the dancers were polished, precise and fabulous – something I’ve certainly come to expect from BROS.

The roles of young Dexter and Tracy were filled by Evan Huntley-Robertson and Nancy Robinson respectively. Together, their dance was both well- choreographed and delivered. Definitely ones to watch in the future...

Meg Hird took on the onerous responsibility of Stage Manager for this production and assisted by Jojo Leppink, and a stage crew of eleven, ensured everything ran seamlessly and with minimal fuss. The fact that everything ran so smoothly is testament to Meg’s management and the entire stage crew.

Costumes were designed by Susi Deal, of excellent standard and appropriate for the time period and setting. Wardrobe was handled by Terri Cresswell, Zoe Harvey-Lee, Lesley Alexander and Barbara Thomas. Given the cast size, and number of costumes used, it must have been challenging to ensure everything was in order and that everyone was correctly dressed. Wigs & Makeup were managed by Louise Ellard-Turnbull and again were of a high standard and appropriate for the time period.

Ed Pagett, assisted by Mike Bradbury, Tony Pike and Chris Pike was responsible for the Lighting and Stuart Vaughan, assisted by Jo Epps and Jacky Cook were responsible for the Sound. Both groups must have enjoyed the facilities at Richmond Theatre – the result of which was faultless technical support. When Sound and Lighting go this well it’s easy to forget the hard work required to reach this level.

Jacqui Grebot and Vicky Horder put together, and managed, an array of quality Props. These were handled well and all appropriate for the setting and time period.

The 14-page show programme was of a very high standard and packed with so much information for the audience to enjoy reading. Unfortunately, I'm not certain who to acknowledge here, as I cannot see a credit listed, but there were some great photographs of rehearsals, interesting cast biographies and nice 'touches' throughout. As always, it was pleasing to see the prominent NODA reference and

I'd like to suggest that BROS submit this programme into the **NODA London Poster & Programme Competition 2019**. Simply download the entry form, from the below web link, and submit together with six programmes.

<https://www.noda.org.uk/regions/london/noda-london-poster-programme-competition-2019>

All in all, this was a sparkling and energetic production, imaginatively directed with a most talented and enthusiastic cast. It fully deserved to be staged at the Richmond Theatre and the audience most definitely left having really enjoyed this show.

Congratulations to everyone at BROS for another huge success!