

PROMENADE PRODUCTIONS

A Musical Journey

The Bacon Theatre, Cheltenham.

July 14th 2017

***Directors for the adults: Heather Newman and Daphne Herbert
Directors for the Young Promenaders: Heather Gallagher and Ceri Holder***

Choreographer: Kate Williams

MD: David Manifold.

Promenade Productions decided on a Compilation Show this year instead of their usual summer show. This type of show often creates more organising than a full show but it does give opportunities to people who would not consider taking on a lead role and also being able to perform songs from shows not available to non-professional groups. On this occasion it was an extremely varied evening with the adult members combining with The Young Promenaders and the Phoenix Dancers in support of Sue Ryder, a local Hospice.

The evening began with the Young Promenaders and a selection from Oliver! starting with 'Food Glorious Food', which was followed by a moving rendition of 'Where is Love', finishing with a lively 'Consider Yourself' with the adults joining the youngsters.

It was simply set with a raised area towards the back of the stage with steps leading to it and a screen onto which relevant, well chosen images were projected, the Victorian street scene for 'Consider Yourself' in the Oliver! selection was evocative. Mostly the costumes were simple black and white outfits with additional adornment; I liked the Nuns with their white collars for the extracts from 'The Sound of Music'. The variety of coloured tee shirts for 'Joseph' added to the 'Technicolor' image; and the masks for 'Masquerade' were stunning. The lighting created an effective atmosphere for each number and the sound balance between piano and drums and voices was good.

The programme had obviously been carefully planned with an enjoyable mix of items from the youngsters, adults and dancers, with choices from modern shows and old favourites, with the first half brought to a close with an ensemble number 'You'll ever Walk Alone'; and the second half opening and closing with two lively numbers 'Putting On The Ritz' from Putting on the Ritz, and 'Razzle Dazzle' from Chicago.

It is often difficult to deliver songs in a meaningful way when out of the context of a show, but the directors had managed this. Diction was excellent throughout. The singing was of a high standard and chorus mistress Jodie Dwight had worked hard in rehearsals. The Young Promenaders demonstrated what a wealth of young talent the group has with their selections from 'Matilda' and 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat'. The evening had many highlights and it was a delight to hear again the selection from 'Chess', which the Society had performed in its entirety two years ago, and 'The King and I' from last year.

I understand there had been difficulties on the musical front with people stepping in at the last minute but the team worked well together, with Jacqueline Adams on piano, Keith Brain on percussion and Alan and Karen Gillespie conducting.

The whole evening was most enjoyable with the dancers supporting several numbers and their lovely interpretation of the music from 'The Lion King'. The whole company must be congratulated on their contributions but my personal favourites were Olivia Sheldon and Jodie Dwight with 'I Know Him So Well', Gary Lines singing 'Bring Him Home' and Olivia Sheldon with 'Unexpected Song'.

Everyone had worked together as a team contributing to the success of 'A Musical Journey'. Well done everyone.

***Frankie Telford
Regional Representative. District 15.***

Any observation made by the reviewer can only be based on what he sees at the performance in question; and that the observations made will prove helpful in improving future productions.