

Stampede Theatre Company - West Side Story (Report by Pam Booth)

Director Royston Bayfield

Musical Director Tom Kyle

Choreographers Rachel McGuire Donna Woodman

This is one of my favourite shows and the young company tackled it with enthusiasm. The all important parts of Tony and Maria were well cast and the couple worked well together and sang beautifully. The dancing routines were ambitious and exciting and fighting scenes were thrilling to watch. Congratulations to the unseen orchestra as they coped superbly with the complex score. I loved the little extras, especially the dream scene of the fight and as ever lighting and effects added to the success of the show. Setting it in modern times worked well, (although personally I missed the fluffy frocks,) and this, added to the moving finale, highlighted how things never really change.

Upstagers - Oliver!

Director Gill Jackson & Paul Nowland

MD Phil Walsh

Choreographer & Musical Staging Paul Nowland

It was somewhat darker production, being a little nearer the novel. Proscenium's set looked awesome on the Alhambra's big stage, leaving plenty of room for the sixty Workhouse Children. The energetic ensemble were given individual characters rather than being just chorus members, this was used to advantage in street scenes such as 'Consider Yourself' and the delightful Bloomsbury scene where the audience viewed the vendors through Brownlow's window. An ideal Oliver (Eddie Paget) and a spirited Dodger (Jed Morris) led Fagin's mischeiveous gang, as the crafty old Jew (Mark Allan), gave a studied characterisation. Nancy (Vicky Settle) was vulnerable to the villainous Bill Sikes (Jonny Tate). A highlight was the lusty comical performances of Mr Bumble and a buxom Widow Corney (Andrew Walton & Gemma Durkin).

Keighley AODS - Fiddler on the Roof

Producer Jay Livngstone

MD John Webb

Choreographer Judith Chapman

A very effective set had an extended area, where an endearing Tevye (Peter Whitley) prayed to God in his serious yet amusing monologues, Golde (Louise Hindle Barton), his long suffering wife was wisely, yet warmly portrayed, while busybody Yente (Sheila Kershaw) tried in vain to supply husbands for Tevye's attractive daughters who untraditionally found love for themselves. Most ethnic dancing was done by a Ukrainian ensemble, so congratulations to the 4 chorus men who performed a genuine Bottle Dance without the aid of 'trick' bottle & hats. Under an expertly wielded baton, the 'reduced orchestra' version of the score had a very full sound throughout. Worthy renditions of 'Tradition' and the 'Sabbath Prayer' were sung by the cast who captured the emotional community spirit of Annatevka..

Glusburn Institute - Oliver!

Director Dev Swan

Music Recordists Rick Ashworth & Jay Bressert
Choreographer Tom Smithson

Being a youth production, I wondered how they'd cope with the recorded orchestral score and adult roles, but it worked out fine. Oliver (Tom Blake) & Dodger (Jason Jennings) both acted well together, but unfortunately Jason struggled with the melody in *Consider Yourself*, the wily old Fagin (Iain Barwick) was well portrayed and an extremely confident Nancy (Tamara Swan) sang a truly emotional *As Long As He Needs Me*. Most of the main characters fared well. Doubling as workhouse children and then as Fagin's gang, the cheeky younger kids all sang heartily, A few being given the chance to shine as Bloomsbury street vendors. Reflecting my opinion another critic (my granddaughter age 5), excitedly said to the Director 'I enjoyed this show very, very much'!

Footnote: GI 's Oliver in their 1997 production, Simon Shorten, is now performing in the West End production of *Les Miserables* and is the understudy for Jean Valjean.

Guiseley AOS - The Likes Of Us

Director/Choreographer Michael A Kirkby
MD Ian Sapiro

The red carpet was out for this Leeds premier. Interestingly the Narrator (Terry Kelly) dressed as a different character for each scene. The role of Dr. Barnardo (Fraser Wilkinson) was beautifully sung, he was well partnered by evangelist Syrie (Nicole Quartermain), in stark contrast a spirited Rosie (Alison Wood) led the chorus in the bawdy numbers, for which simple, effective choreography that all could do well, was created. Young lovers Johnny & Jenny (Liam Lloyd & Leila Briggs) were delightful together. The men's Prime Minister and Cabinet's 'musical chairs' routine raised much laughter as did the amusing Auctioneer's (Gary Holmes) sequence. All twenty cockney children sang the title song well, Ian's excellent young orchestra played the 23 musical numbers with aplomb. A most pleasant evening

Settle AOS - 130th Anniversary Production - My Fair Lady

Producer Stephanie Phillip
MD Freda Hargreaves

The set created by the society worked well, the production was costumed superbly by Mollie Limpets, especially the Ascot scene which received spontaneous loud applause. The orchestra as ever accompanied the cast so well. Heading the cast was an excellent Higgins (Robin Knipe) in his 4th reprise of this role and a nice portrayal of Pickering (Eric Parker). Though her cockney dialogue was too hurriedly spoken, Eliza (Rachel Humberstone) was delightfully captivating as a refined lady, Doolittle (Jim Corden) was a likeable rascal, enjoying his big numbers with the chorus. There were nice cameos of Mrs Higgins (Audrey Daley) and Mrs Pearce (Chris. Sturrock), other supporting principals and the chorus all contributed well to the success of this show. 'You did it! Well Done!'

Skipton & District AODS - Calamity Jane

Director & Choreographer Craig Cowdroy
MD Catherine Sweet

The Mart theatre added just the right atmosphere for this western musical, and how well it was performed. Calamity (Helen Procter) gave her all in a feisty performance, she was a bundle of energy throughout, yet a little more tenderness would have helped in her love scene with Bill (Mark Rundle) who gave strong support. Then there was more romance from sweet singing (Cressida Ford) and Danny (David Nicholson). At short notice Director Craig had to take over the role of Francis Fryer, it was good to see a pro' at work. There were worthy performances from Henry Miller (Neil Helliwell) and Susan (Anita Eccles). In this innovative 'theatre in the round' production, the entire ensemble were all convincing individual characters, who weren't allowed to stand still for a moment.

Ilkley Amateur Operatic Society - Alice in Wonderland (Report by Pam Booth)

Director Miranda Armitage
Assistant Director Lisa Debney
Musical Director Judith Idle

This was such an enjoyable show I went along later in the week to see it for a second time. When it comes to children's entertainment Disney certainly gets it right and this colourful well directed show was no exception, with catchy tunes and lots of dancing it kept the audience entertained throughout. The young and talented cast worked so well together and all the children, and adults, made a super contribution. The set was simple but eye catching and along with the lovely costumes and clever lighting made a kaleidoscope of colour. There were some intricate dance numbers and great songs all adding up to a show to be proud of.

Bingley AOS - South Pacific (Report by Chris Ingram)

Director Tony Cross
Musical Director Maureen Earl
Choreographer Paul Nowland

This for me was the start of a very busy week and what a start it was – this production would have graced any theatre in the UK. Superb interpretations of Nellie and Emile by Samantha Ball and David Hall with both displaying their acres of experience to consummate effect. Excellent support from the other cast members with lots of attention to detail with little nuances being brought out which are often missed. I must make particular mention of the choreographer for Honey Bun with not only Billis in grass skirt and coconut bra but all the young CeeBees as an all dancing chorus of Honey Buns. Costumes were in the main very good especially since the society was on a budget – good to see the girls wearing longer and fuller shorts as per the period rather than their "boy shorts" from the holiday!
A great night's entertainment – well done to all.

The Grove and Rawdon Theatre Company - A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum (Report by Pam Booth)

Director Royston Bayfield

Musical Director Cathy Sweet

This is such a jolly romp of a show and you can sit with a smile on your face throughout. The well selected cast handled it so easily and there were some wonderful characters who brought out all the humour in this clever script. It may not have the most memorable of musical scores but these talented singers made the most of the numbers. There are no scene changes in this show but once again clever lighting added to the mood and the road leading off the stage gave an added interest to the set. This was entertainment at its best and of a very high standard and as it was the last show for Grove and Rawdon before they merge with Stampede it was a great way to finish.

Haworth West Lane Baptist AOS - The Gondoliers

Director Michael Lofthouse

MD Pamela Dimbleby

In this unique little venue, the set was a colourful continental café where the waitress, during the overture, placed the ensemble in a variety of poses in readiness for the opening chorus. The group's younger principals Marco & Gianetta (Leon Waksberg & Victoria Mulley) and Giuseppe & Tessa (Paul Cross & Gill Dobson) worked well together, as did Casilda & Luiz (Elizabeth Hopker and Josh Breeze). Adding years of experience were the Duke & Duchess (Roly Robertshaw & Janine McAndrew) and Don Alhambra (Bill Bairstow). All were in good voice. Marco's '*A Pair of Sparkling Eyes*' was well received, another highlight being the company's lively '*Cachucha*'. It was so refreshing to see a good mix of ages in this production. Congratulations for introducing so many young people to musical theatre.

Sutton AODS - Old Mother Hubbard

Producer Phillip Smith

MD David Boddy

Choreographer Katrina Knights

Another happy panto from this group. With a nice blend of colourful costumes, comedy and adventure the panto regulars Mother Hubbard & the Baron (Dean Harness & David Knights), with Cecil & Gloriana (Philip Smith & Katrina Knights), helped by the magical good fairies all triumphed over the evil Sir Mortimer (John Cahill) and his black fairies. The show rolled merrily along interspersed with a really good assortment of music from an excellent combo, which all the company enjoyed singing heartily. In the song sheet a little good natured heckling of the Dame and Cecil added to the fun. It was a joy to see adult and junior members, many from the same families featured on stage together for this popular annual event.

Yeadon AODS - Ladies Down Under (Report by Marguerite Jennings)

Director Adam Gregory

Choreographer Laura Judge

A heart warming sequel to Ladies Day when the 4 fish workers, with their winnings from Royal Ascot in York, take a trip to Australia. The quartet of talented ladies gave a very convincing, subtle and sensitive portrayals whilst the 2 members of the cast played 5 characters each, some more outrageous than others. The set, properties and costumes were simple but effective, with good sound being an important part in creating the atmosphere. The all dancing and singing Gay and Lesbian Parade scene was very funny with 2 very luscious looking drag queens – Koala Bear (Gary Holmes) and Bondi Bitch (Nick Green). A very enjoyable evening.