

2013 Calamity Jane

Director: Kathy West

Musical Director: Anna Minear

Choreographer: Maureen Pascoe

Costumes: Costumes To Go

Scenery: Andy Martin Production Support

Venue: The Keay, St Austell

This show requires bags of energy, forth-right performances, a cracking pace and tightly considered portrayals of the stereo-type characters. The society gave all of this and with 100% commitment on Opening Gala Night in front of an audience full of invited dignitaries and society stalwarts. Despite the pressure to please and send the audience out to sell the few leftover seats for the following performances, the company gave the appearance of a relaxed and happy performance which was enthusiastically received.

It is a feature of this society that Andy Martin's set designs provide a wonderful arena in which to perform. Seemingly so simple, the three trucks turned and opened to reveal wonderfully evocative pictures giving varied heights and good acoustic backing. The effect throughout of the wooden slats and "oldie worldie" charm ensured that the production had a unifying visual whole. Of course, this excellent set benefits from Andy personally lighting it. There were some lovely touches with moonlight streaming in and the flame-like footlights to the stage. The opening & closing projected sequences book-ended the show most effectively.

As usual sound production was good. The clarity of diction from the actors mixed with the attentive sound operation worked extremely well with all lines clearly audible and a good balance with the band. All departments had received the usual care and therefore everything looked good and in keeping with costumes, props, make-up and other accessories all toning in well with the set to give a unified visual effect. The crew was well managed and changes were efficiently and effortlessly achieved. The co-ordinated turning of the trucks was particularly effective.

Production decisions made by the creative and production teams ensured that the presentation had its own style and maintained it throughout. The slightly cartoon effect worked excellently, clearly set out in the movement during the overture and revisited appropriately in the various exciting musical numbers. Dialogue was clearly delivered with panache and gags appropriately drilled home. Characters were defined and relationships benefited from the good rapport that the actors maintain. Being very much a musical comedy the show was performed to its best advantage with this direct style and high energy delivery.

Meanwhile, everything was ably supported by a delightful band under its usual decisive leadership. The varied colouring of each musical number was highlighted and climaxes well controlled. Things were so well controlled and balanced, that most of the audience would not have noticed the company's over-excitement during Act One. The blip was efficiently covered and everything proceeded remarkably calmly. It was good to hear some warm harmonies in the "Black Hills" number, despite a couple of people being unsure where to stand, and the gentlemen gave a virile performance of "Adelaide" with Paul Pearce adding a warm tone to the reprise. How wonderful to have such a voice available for this short piece.

The "Can-Can" girls certainly caused a storm. The Mayor certainly woke up when they were featured. It was good to see the dancing integrated into the action and not standing out except where necessary. Once again, this was all designed to fit into the style and period of the piece and was ably supported by the rest of the company.

The individual principal roles were all well cast. The very best use was made of the talent on offer. This is a sure sign of a good working relationship between the performers themselves and between Director and actors. Characters were well defined and maintained throughout and the story clearly told.

Nick Lawrence

NODA South West Regional Councillor