

ROSEBOWL ADJUDICATION

NAME OF COMPANY	Centre Stage
NAME OF PRODUCTION	Thoroughly Modern Millie
VENUE	The Pavilion Theatre, Exmouth
DATE	2.30 pm on 01 November 2014
ADJUDICATOR	Barbara Smith

PRESENTATION

SET including STAGE FURNITURE and PROPS

A fine Set was provided by Scenic Projects which perfectly suited the stage proportions and also allowing for a fine performance area, and the use of the Blacks between the larger changes of location was well conceived. Effective projection of the title of the Production as a Pre-set, and the first scene with a backcloth of a New York skyline. Fine insets of Hotel Reception area, and an Art Deco backcloth for the Office scene, and later a room inset at the Hotel to reveal the plotting of Mrs. Meers and the reactions of the two Chinese. A simple but effective backcloth to depict Broadway show adverts of the era, and again the New York backcloth for the Club and then the inset of Prison Bars for the arrest. Act 2 and again the Art Deco backcloth for Office, but it was a pity that the window ledge scene could not have been more visually 'realistic' as I have seen in other productions. Use of Gauze effective for Muzzy 'pots and pans' kitchen scene, and a blurred backcloth for Restaurant, Hotel lobby with Lift effect was good.

The Props and stage furniture again mainly supplied by Scenic Projects were excellent and all suitcases in fine period style – the 'Corona' typewriters were impressive. An effective use of the professional resources suiting both the Musical presentation and the stage area.

STAGE MANAGEMENT

This was an excellent input with swift and smooth set changing at all times and ensuring that the production ran smoothly and effortlessly. All lighting and sound cues appeared well prompted, and I have a great admiration for the obvious efficiency and organisation of the backstage Wardrobe with all the many costume changes – and with critically swift changes.

A first class input.

LIGHTING

An effective lighting design and excellent operation. There was a fine soft amber for the first meeting of Jimmy and Millie and then good use of dim lighting and gobo on the Blacks giving an added atmosphere. Blues with the Amber in the Office scene and effective against the Art Deco background and getting brighter for the office tap routine and use of Amber on Graydon for his final very fast piece of patter. Very dim lighting in the Club and good suspended lights creating a fine atmosphere, and later a spot highlighting the Cop and I appreciated the flashes of light for the Mug Shots. Good spot on Jimmy 'What Do I Need With Love' and I appreciated the Amber light becoming brighter for the early morning and cross lighting on Millie. 'Only In New York' with Muzzy with lighting with Reds and Amber. Good spot on Millie for 'Jimmy'. Act 2 and fine overall lighting for the opening scene and subdued as Millie is dejected, and fine spots on all four in 'Falling in Love With Someone Reprise'. Throughout the use of Spots and Cross lighting and sympathetic use of Amber created fine atmospheres, and the Visual 'translations' well timed and projected.

SOUND

The mic'ing was excellent and all song and dialogue heard clearly and balance with the Orchestra was good. Prompting and Cuing was obviously very effective and making a fine input.

COSTUME & MAKE-UP

The sense of period was excellently captured with the costuming and with all 'flapper' dresses in good style which were designed and made by the Company. I appreciated the three piece suits Jimmy and Graydon wore, and although not credited in the programme I assume the super suits for the 'Moderns' were professional hire – and all fitting very well. I liked the pale pinks and longer more frilled dresses worn by Miss Dorothy which reflected her character excellently and the fine Chinese costumes of Mrs. Meers and Ching Ho and Bung Foo. Excellent use of glitter fabrics for costumes in Club scenes and with Muzzy looking exotic.

The Chinese make-ups and hairstyles were super and indeed all hair styling in good period style – and I admired the Boys with slick hair and partings.

This was an excellent input especially with the costume fittings and changes and I congratulate the Wardrobe for such a superb input.

MUSIC

ORCHESTRA

A very impressive Orchestra fourteen piece Orchestra with a fine combination of musical instruments. Overture with strong rhythm and smooth transitions from rousing to lyrical, and throughout the underscoring was excellently modulated, and the Conducting was

excellently supportive of the performers on stage. I appreciated the excellent sinister atmospheric underscoring as Mrs. Meers entered with the poisoned apple. 'The Nutty Cracker Suite' with good Percussion beat and Trombone input, and fine Strings and Keyboard in 'Jimmy'.

'Entr'acte' with fine pace and swing, and there was a lovely sensitive backing for Millie with 'Gimme, Gimme' and at the end a change of tempo and build up.

The input of the Orchestra added greatly to the period atmosphere, support for Singers, and the success of the presentation.

SINGING

Strong opening number from Millie and clearly projected with good pitch, resonance and fine animation of the song, and with well sung input from the Moderns and excellent final note – all giving this sequence a strong impact. 'How The Other Half Lives' was well characterised by both Millie and Miss Dorothy and the 'Not For The Life Of Me (reprise)' from Bun Foo and Ching Ho projected with good unison input and fine relating both to each other and the audience. 'The Speed Test' was given a masterly touch with fine increasing patter from Graydon and delivered with good vocal and breath control and clear diction, and Millie also with fine sense of the patter song and holding of a note – there was an excellent increase of tempo. Mrs Meers gave "They Don't Know" an excellent characterisation and sung with a fine vocal range and control making this a memorable number. Jimmy with a promising Baritone and good diction gave 'What Do I Need With Love' a good lyrical quality and with well held final note. 'Only In New York' from Muzzy needed a more relaxed flamboyant projection, and 'Jimmy' from Millie well modulated and characterised.

Act 2 and 'Forget About The Boy' with a strong and very well characterised input from Miss Flannery and support from the Company. Lovely burst of melodic singing from Graydon although sometimes a little insecure on top notes, but with Dorothy delivering a beautifully captured romantic duet with 'Ah Sweet Mystery of Life/Falling In Love With Someone'. 'Muqin' excellently projected and characterised by Mrs. Meers, Bun Foo and Ching Ho. Muzzy 'Long As I'm Here With You' well backed by the Boys, and 'Gimme Gimme' with Millie was a sweet number with a strongly delivered build up and lovely final note. The final Reprises all delivered with strength and fine characterisation. The singing input was extremely good and I was impressed with the animation and character given to all numbers.

DIRECTION

There was a strong hand at the helm of this production with all elements firmly coordinated, and I was impressed with the obvious enthusiasm, focus, and disciplined control the young Company had over every performance aspect. The characterisations were excellent, and all dialogue and song very well studied and motivated with fine accents and with confident body language and movements. The Production flowed

smoothly throughout and with an excellent pace of delivery. The stage business was well choreographed and slickly executed – for instance Millie tripping up Jimmy at the beginning, the stage business with Mrs. Meers, Bun Foo and Ching Ho. The co-ordination with the Choreographer and Musical Director resulted in a seamless presentation of the story line with flowing and integrated dialogue, song, and dance. A first class Youth Musical Production.

MOVEMENT & DANCE

CHOREOGRAPHY including DANCE SKILLS & GROUPING

The choreography was excellently conceived both with the use of the stage and within the scope of the Company, and both the interesting patterns and the groupings at the end of numbers were very effective. A fine opening tap routine and I noted that all were in perfect step with interesting groupings and stylised movements and lovely ‘attitudes’. A good grouping and body language of the Hotel Girls reading the letters, and a good movement piece later with Millie and Miss Dorothy and a following tap dance. Another good tap routine with ‘The Speed Test’ and I appreciated the input of the Male tappers with the disciplined routine – good final picture. The body language and stage movement of Mrs. Meers in ‘They Don’t Know’ was excellent. Fine energy and interesting routine with the ‘flapper dance with fine arm movements in ‘The Nuttycracker Suite’, and ‘Only In New York’ had a fine entry of the Moderns and Charleston although the Muzzy piece was a little stiff and slightly out with timing and needed a more flamboyant routine. Act 2 - A very fine tap routine and all in good timing and use of the stage and lovely ending with Millie on the chair. Graydon and Dorothy fine input with a well stylised scene did not piece of Tango and with an impressive Lift, and I wanted a more flamboyant scene with ‘Long As I Am Here With You’. A good Walk Down. Alongside the Leads, the input of the Company was excellent with a disciplined dance input.

ACTING

CHARACTERISATION

MILLIE – This character has to keep the action going and there was an excellent energy and stage presence with this Millie combined with all round fine performance skills of acting, singing and dance. A good first piece and meeting with Jimmy and later a fine relating with Miss Dorothy all played with good timing and comedy play. Again fine projection of the comedy with the Office scene and again in the patter sequence and relating with Graydon. Lovely dejection when she sees Jimmy with Dorothy and later her upset with Dorothy. Nice piece in the window ledge scene where she looks down and good relating and timing with Jimmy in the ‘pots and pans’ scene. Good reaction when Graydon declares it is “White Slavery” and the subsequent quick reactions. An excellent input.

JIMMY – A smart first entry and good meeting with Milly. and throughout a direct and confident character was established. Good scene in the Club with Millie and subsequent business with the Mug Shot and later a well timed exchange with Millie over Graydon. Lovely trying to flatter Miss Flannery, and as already mentioned a fine piece on the window ledge with Millie. Throughout a fine use of the stage and relaxed movement and body language and as with Millie, fine performance skills of acting, singing, and dance. An excellent performance.

MRS. MEERS – This was a very impressive performance projecting a superb characterisation of the duplicitous Mrs. Meers, and with fine relating both to the other actors on stage, and also with a strong relating out to the audience. The switch from the Chinese mannerisms and accent to the American ex-actress was excellent, and again from all the false friendliness to evil nasty bad temper, was all first class – as shown immediately with her first telephone call. Again at the beginning and firmly establishing this falseness with gliding over to the hapless Ethel, sharp snaps of temper, then reaction to Miss Dorothy when she said “I am an Orphan”. Her ruthless blackmail control over Ching Ho and Bun Foo was strongly projected with fierce body language and vocal shade, and stage business with them was slick and well timed.

This was a first class performance and with excellent body language, singing and movement skills.

MISS DOROTHY BROWN – Another fine characterisation and a very sweet and ladylike presence was projected both with body language and visual appearance, and this was a super contrast to the upfront confrontational character of Millie. Very well projected performance skills with good reactions, and a fine relating with Ching Ho. Another fine performance.

CHING HO and BUN FOO – They were superb – and I was in admiration of their grasp of the Chinese which sounded very impressive. The two Chinese worked admirably together and always with superb gestures and slick stage business – I loved their submissive reactions to the dreaded Mrs. Meers. Lovely adoration of Dorothy by CHING HO and excellent ‘dumbness’ of BUN FO.

Two excellent characterisations.

MISS FLANNERY – A strong and severe presence was projected and a lovely scene with Millie over the ‘mistypes’. Good succumbing to Jimmy at first and then a fine rebuff when she realises he is flattering her. A fine projection of this character.

MR. TREVOR GRAYDON – I liked the first impression of sober business man who then becomes very whacky and super bursting into patter song. There was a good energy and fine sense of comedy play to this performance alongside the good all round skills. Another fine strongly projected characterisation.

MUZZY – A performer with a really strong potential for well rounded skills, but at present the tension showing in the upper body and shoulders is inhibiting breathing and breath control and relaxed movement. There were some moments of lack of clarity with dialogue as Muzzy but the input in Act 2 as the ‘new girl’ was really well characterised. I did not feel that the flamboyant and outrageous character of Muzzy was truly projected, but the potential is there.

THE HOTEL GIRLS – Lovely ‘flappy’ girls in fine style and with good dance and movement skills – I appreciated the hapless Ethel who looked so sad at lack of letter. They added greatly to the overall success of the presentation.

THE MODERNS – Again excellent input and the Boys’ tap was super and again all in fine style and making a very strong contribution to the success of the production.

OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT

This was a very fine achievement and I was impressed with the high standard of the performance skills – acting, singing, and dance, and the energy and motivations of the Young Company. I have already mentioned the excellent Characterisations, discipline and focus of the Company, which have all combined to make this a first class Presentation. Credit must also be given to the strong Direction and the input of Orchestra, Choreography, Costume and Make-up, and Stage Management, and with all elements strongly co-ordinated. This was a very strong Production with fine ensemble playing from the Young Company.

Thank you for your kind hospitality and I look forward to being asked again in the near future to another presentation from Centre Stage.