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Society : The Sainsbury Singers
Production : Strictly Musicals – Happily Ever After
Date : Thursday 29th October
Venue : Crosfields School - Reading
Report by : Jeanette Maskell

[Show Report](#)

It is always a pleasure to visit this friendly society; so I was delighted to be asked to review their latest offering.

I was impressed with the storyline and enjoyed it immensely it had been well written and the song choice fitted the narrative perfectly. It would've been nice to mention in the programme which shows the songs were taken from. I knew most of them, however there were a couple I did not know at all.

Seasons of Love – Ensemble - (Choreographer Denise Schult) – This was an excellent start to the evenings' entertainment and it was delightful to see the youngsters singing and moving along with the adults. The movement was simple and effect creating patterns that were pleasing to the eye. The voices blended splendidly and there were some great harmonies

Memory/Can't Help Falling in Love - (Soloists Brian Bretney/Hilary Latimer) – As the two narrators linking the story they were perfect. They both had believable characters and built a rapport with the audience which drew us into the action. Jack had a sense of fun with good projection diction and accent. He portrayed just the right amount of sentiment and the final scene when he finally finds Mary was quite poignant. Mary had an easy natural manner which transmitted well to the audience and her diction and projection were excellent. The marriage of these two numbers worked exceedingly well with both singers giving emotionally charged renditions.

Cabaret - (Soloists Emma Fry/Kazia Grainger/Freya Wilson/Katie Wise – Choreographer Catherine Hannan) – These four young ladies looked fabulous as they performed their "Andrews Sisters" interpretation of this number. It was clear they had worked hard on perfecting the first rate harmonies and synchronisation of their moves.

Can't Take My Eyes off of You – Ensemble - (Choreographer Denise Schult) – This was a delightfully poignant number and I particularly liked the eye contact between the couples which really enhanced the vocals. The movement had been well devised and the addition of the dancers around the couples really brought out the story.

I Can Hear the Bells- (Soloist Lorraine Cox – Choreographer Catherine Hannan/Kazia Grainger/Emma Reeves) – The soloist here was a pure joy. She was lively and animated and captured the true spirit of the song. Her vocals were strong and pure and her diction impeccable. The girls in this number executed their moves with a gaiety befitting the lyrics making the whole a truly uplifting experience.

Getting to Know You – (Soloists Louise Quelch/Chris Reeves) – These two forged a great rapport in their little scene it was tender yet always with a sense of fun. The number was put over in a pleasant convivial style with the vocalists singing with clarity, a good sense of timing and pleasing harmonies.

Only Love – (Soloist Emma Reeves) – This was my favourite number of the evening. The soloist had a rich resonant tone with vocals that floated effortlessly across the audience; and there was depth and passion in her presentation.

Flash Bang Wallop – (Soloists Amy Hale/Cath Hannan/Michael Schult/Jackie Stoffels/Chris Thomas – Choreographer Denise Schult) – The choreography here was ideal for the piece; it was lively and entertaining and was designed so every member of the cast could perform with exactitude; which they did with an energetic enthusiasm. The soloists all sang with good projection and clear diction which is imperative in this type of number.

Let's Face the Music and Dance – Ensemble (Choreographer Denise Schult) – In complete contrast to the last number this was lyrical sedate and controlled though still lively with an ardent passion. It was beautifully choreographed and sung by the ensemble with great dynamics.

You Two – (Soloists Stephen Cox/Chris/Reeves/Michael Shult) – I really enjoyed this number the three lads totally owned it. They demonstrated the camaraderie brilliantly during their dialogue and this continued throughout the number. It was highly entertaining they had great singing voice and sang with striking elucidation.

When This Lousy War is Over – (Soloist Rob Latimer) – This was eerily haunting and was sung with great emotion; creating a true sense of nostalgia!

No One But You – (Soloists Stephen Cox/Kazia Grainger/Amy Hale/Helen Long/Louise Quelch/Gareth Wells – Choreographer Denise Schult/Matt Smith) – The soloists here all acquitted themselves admirably; they all produced a good sound with great diction and projection. The movement was simple yet effective enhancing a wistful sentimental and befittingly sombre end to the act.

One Short Day – Full Company – (Choreographer Denise Schult) – This was a great number it was full of life powerful and enterprising. The movement echoed the words absolutely and the cast had been drilled thoroughly so they were in perfect unison. The singing had plenty of light and shade creating a stimulating and captivating opening to the second act.

Somewhere That's Green – (Soloist Jessamy Vincent) – This was an exceptionally compelling solo. It was competently sung with an in depth grasp of the lyrics. Her tone was full and rounded with great diction and projection.

Always Look on the Bright Side of Life – (Soloists Stephen Cox/Rob Latimer/Chris/Reeves/Michael Schult/Chris Thomas/Gareth Wells – Choreographer Kazia Grainger/Matt Smith) – This was hugely entertaining; with all the lads moving and singing with verve and gusto. The movement enhanced the humour of the piece having a certain Pythonesque quality about it.

For Now – (Soloists Stephen Cox/Emma Fry/Amy Hale/Rob Latimer/Helen Long/Jackie Stoffels/Freya Wilson/Katie Wise – Choreographer Kazia Grainger/Emma Reeves) – I did not know this number however enjoyed it immensely. It was light bright and vivacious with the soloists making the most of the lyrics. The dancers in this number were excellent performing in harmony with the singers; with movement that was lithe and fluent.

Where is Love – (Soloist Gareth Wells) – I wasn't sure this number would work however I am always pleased to be proven wrong! It suited his voice and he sang with a natural simplicity which was quite moving.

We're in the Money – Female Ensemble – (Choreographer Denise Schult/Catherine Hannan) – This was a super number the girls sang with precision and animated dynamics and the tap routine was a triumph. There were occasions when the timing became a little ragged as the girls tried to get ahead of the band. It is imperative that you listen to your music rather than being overly enthusiastic. However overall it was artistic creative and above all highly entertaining!

Look With Your Heart – (Soloists Chris Thomas/Helen Thomas – Choreographer Denise Schult) – This was another piece of music that I did not know; again I really enjoyed it. The soloist here sang with soulful warmth that was charmingly endearing. The dancers were balletic rhythmic and expressive complementing the song to the full.

Spread the Love Around – Full Company – (Choreographer Denise Schult) – What an upbeat way to end the show. This was a slick well-choreographed number creating gratifying arrangements around the stage. The cast performed with a boundless energy enthusiastic aplomb and were clearly enjoying themselves getting the audience clapping along.

Matthew Smith - (Producer/Writer) –.This was an enormous undertaking and one that paid huge rewards. The script had been skilfully written with a great storyline and two three dimensional characters to hold the plot together. I really liked the way it gave so many performers the chance to take their turn as Jack or Mary; a unique and inspired concept. Staging was minimalistic which worked well giving the actors the maximum available space in which to perform. I would have liked to have seen Jack and Mary staying on stage to watch the proceedings rather than keep exiting; I feel this would have given the piece a little more fluidity. However this was an exceptional directorial debut and one of which he should be extremely proud.

Jon Brooks – (Musical Director/Musical Arrangements) – It must have taken this chap an absolute age creating the arrangements and harmonies; however I can tell you it was well worth it. It was clear he had worked hard with principals and chorus ensuring all numbers had expressive dynamics with clear diction and good projection. The small band was excellent they were controlled and well suited to the small theatre.

Kim Hollamby – (Lighting Designer) –.This was a first rate plot, it had great atmosphere and the use of colours enhanced the numbers perfectly. The two tables were spotted and cued to perfection; and the follow spots operated by **Louis Martin** and **Maz Massey** were used to great effect.

Ashley Hillier – (Sound Operator) – Sound was well controlled and all cues were picked up seamlessly.

Becca Simons/Joe Daniels – (DSM & Crew) – There was not a lot for the crew to do here, however it is always good to have technicians on hand should anything go wrong. They also need to ensure the wing space is kept clear in order for cast to make their entrances and this they did.

Kazia Grainger/Matthew Smith – (Props & Set) – Props had been well collated and the stage was dressed to reinforce the story.

Brian Bretney – (Sound Effects) – These were realistic and appropriate to the plot. I don't mind telling you I actually jumped when the machine gun fire started.

Amanda Bretney/Emma Reeves – (Wardrobe Designer & Supervisor) – Costumes were well co-ordinated and I really liked the black and red at the start and the vivid blue at the end. The uniforms and other costumes were in keeping with the depiction of the numbers. I must say I'm not sure how some of the changes were made; they were so quick!

Kerry Thomas/Jessamy Vincent – (Makeup Design & Team) – Make up had been well applied though on the evening of my visit some of the ladies needed a little more blush to enhance their features as they tended to disappear under the lights. I understand the reason behind this; so ladies it is up to you to ensure you support each other and give practical advice.

Catherine Hannan – (Hair) – It is always great to have a resident hair dresser to ensure everyone looks their best. Hair is the icing on the cake adding that finishing touch; turning a good character into a great one!

Thank you

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Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13