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'THE BOY FRIEND' – MAY 2007
WOKING AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY

This light-hearted show has a wonderfully varied musical score and recalls popular songs from the 1920's by Kern, Rodgers and Hart, Gershwin and Cole Porter. Before its run at Wyndhams Theatre in 1954, Sandy Wilson's affectionate spoof of a flapper era musical started off life at the Players Club London where it had had a three-week run. It was expanded into the three-act production that we now enjoy and has remained a firm favourite with audiences.

Under the direction of Paul Harris the overture was delightfully played, and perfectly controlled. Their positioning on stage was an excellent idea. The balance of sound was good and having them perform as the seaside band in the second act worked really well. Not having seen the musical score I don't know if they are all written in, I suspect they are, but if so some of the encores could have been cut as there were so many. Elegant pieces of furniture and the young ladies first appearance created the ambience of a finishing school and the set with French windows completed the picture. The set and costumes in Act Two were super.

Samantha Clarke proved herself capable in her directorial debut and used her stage experience to good effect in the groupings and general plotting of the piece.

The choreography throughout was attractive and imaginative, particularly in 'Sur La Plage' and the dancing was well executed by the cast who mostly maintained the poses and movements of the period.

On the night I attended it was Karina Sugden's first performance as Polly and perhaps because of this she appeared a little lacking in confidence. She very much looked the part and her singing voice, whilst rather quiet in the lower range, was especially good in the upper range. No doubt the lack of volume would have been corrected either by the sound department, or increasing confidence in her following appearances.

Harriet Graves made a poised Madame Dubonnet and had a good French accent. Her vocals were beautifully controlled and in the second act the 'You Don't Want To Play With Me Blues' number with Percival was very entertaining.

As Percival, Geoff Morris was well cast. His demeanour and accent depicted a member of the upper classes and his elegant costume added to his distinguished air.

Playing opposite Polly, Jake Wallis gave a good performance as Tony and looked very smart in his delivery uniform, but it was a pity that he didn't wear lace-up shoes. The heavy looking casuals were unsuitable for the period and he wore them throughout. He had good stage presence and sang well but something a little more relevant to his stage experience would have been interesting to read in his biography.

Katie Linaker captured perfectly the feel of the 1920's. She was splendid in the role of Maisie, held the audiences' attention whenever she was on stage and realised her childhood dream with obvious relish. The choreography was super in her 'Safety in Numbers'.

A good performance too was from Stuart Guest. His accent and portrayal of the only American character was both accomplished and relaxed.

Lord Brockhurst played by Mike Bartlett was constantly on the look out for a pretty girl but was kept under control by and Gillian Freeman playing Lady Brockhurst. They provided a great deal of amusement, both acted well and Mike's singing was good. Jessica Brake was a pert and unusually young Hortense and she sang well, although without the French accent she used in the dialogue.

The red and black theme in act three was most striking. 'The Riviera' was a very good number and Amy Parker sang well as Dulcie.

Other members of the company completed the cast to make the production a visually and aurally attractive one. The chorus singing was of good volume and the numbers were well rehearsed with plenty to watch aside from the main action.



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There were good sound effects and I liked the spotlight on the vocalists although it was difficult to make them come together so perhaps soft edges would have been easier.

The costumes were very good indeed but one or two points worth mentioning are that the men's black shoes needed a good polish, the girls should have had seams drawn up their legs if they couldn't get tights with seams, and there were no Champagne glasses for the Champagne. Bright red lipstick was the order of the day and Maisie wore pink, otherwise the makeup was good.

Congratulations to Keith on yet another super programme in which everything is in the right place and it is interesting to read.

It was a most entertaining evening and I enjoyed meeting the directors as well as coming up on stage to meet the cast. Thank you once again for inviting me to see 'The Boyfriend' and for your kind hospitality on the evening.

E. Gloria Smith

N.O.D.A. Regional Representative District 12