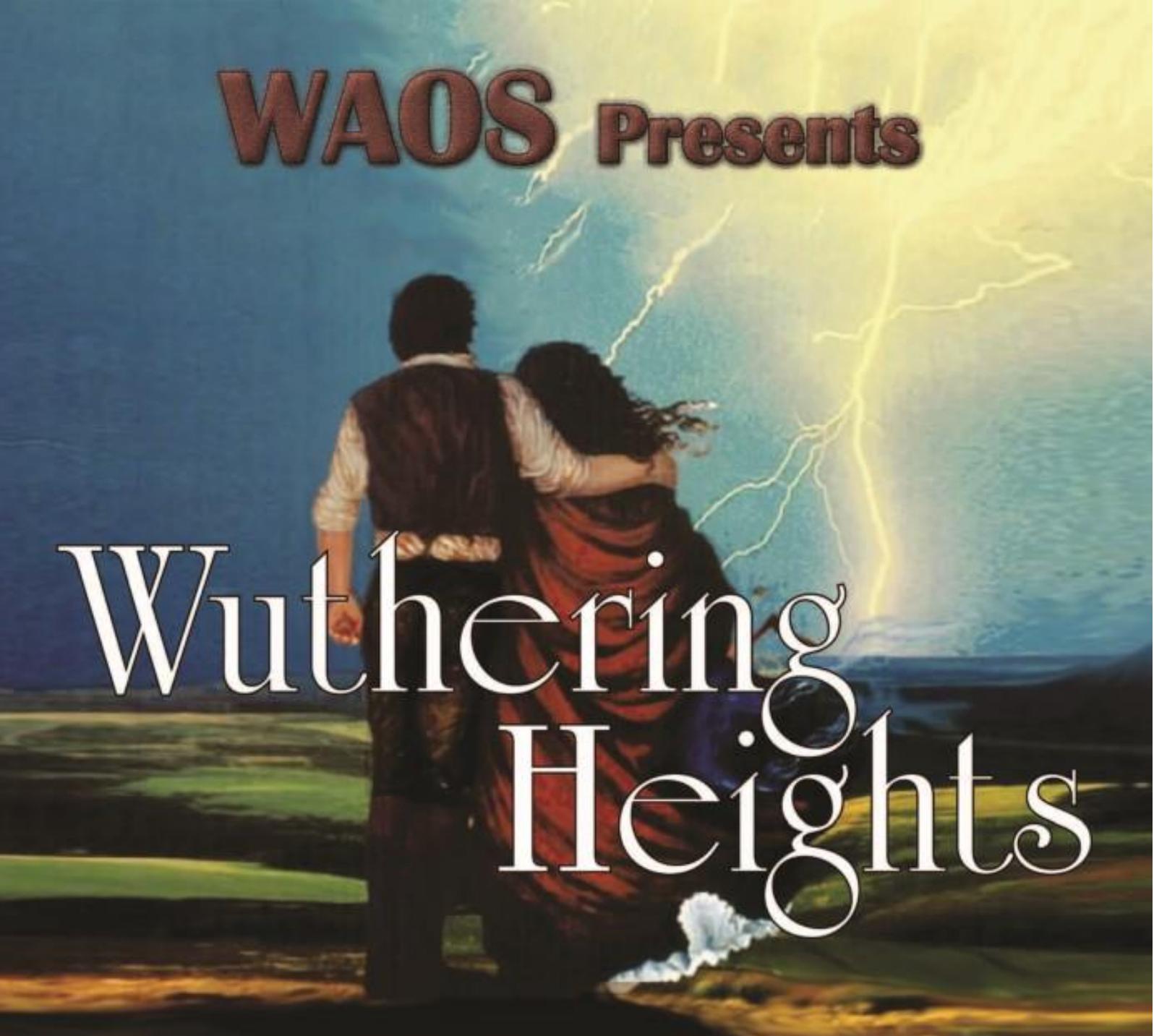


WAOS Presents

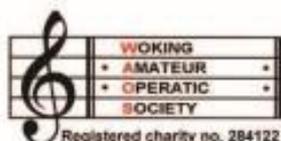


Wuthering Heights

**Book and music by Bernard J. Taylor
by arrangement with Stagescripts**

**Rhoda McGaw Theatre, Woking
5th to 9th May 2015**

Evenings 7:30pm
Saturday Matinée 2:30pm



 <http://waos.info>





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'WUTHERING HEIGHTS' – MAY 2015
WOKING AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY

Staging a musical which does not come under the heading 'tried and tested' is always going to be a gamble, and with music that is not comfortably melodic the audience may struggle to appreciate the challenge it presents to the cast.

Some of the music did sit awkwardly but some of it was beautiful and all of it was performed with confidence and conviction by both the principals and the company. There were more company numbers than in many of the better-known shows and I enjoyed them very much.

The staging was splendid. Numerous different levels made for attractive and creative settings in the big musical numbers, and the scenery was effective. The ground floor of the house stage right cleverly served as a depot for the furniture needed in the different scenes, and the bedroom above was nicely furnished. The back stage crew were appropriately dressed for the piece and worked efficiently to set the scenes as quickly as possible.

In the capable hands of June Saich, the story was presented clearly and her every word could be heard. The 'flash to present' setting on stage throughout the story did not distract from the main action on stage. It was not clear that June was playing the same role as Natasha and without reading the programme I suspect that few people in the audience knew. Maybe I missed something at the very start? On occasion Phil Lockwood who was the willing listener of the story telling needed to project a little more.

Patrick Coad played a rather surly, angry Heathcliff, but we did see flashes of his softer underside and ability to have fun in the more relaxed moments with Cathy. He played the role with passion and put across the musical numbers in the same way.

As Cathy Jenny was superb. Her singing voice was faultless and her acting praiseworthy. She was a delight in the role, bringing a joy and innocence to the character but also

conveying the utter wretchedness she felt when Heathcliff eventually returned, and she realised that there was no turning back on the choice she had made. Her song after Heathcliff leaves was packed with emotion.

Playing her brother Hindley, Lee gave an excellent performance as yet another aggressive male with few social skills to commend him. Despite his arrogance and rudeness it was easy to understand his jealousy of the upstart gypsy boy who was taken under his father's wing and given a place in the Earnshaw home.

Mark and I have a long history together in the amateur theatre world and he surprised me once again with his ability to portray such diverse characters. In the small part of Mr. Earnshaw he was considerate and refined, a complete contrast to Bill Sykes in 'Oliver!'

The loyal and caring servant Nellie Dean was sympathetically played by Natasha, her singing was clear and there were very few lapses from her Northern accent.

Graham Kirby-Smith gave an admirable performance as Edgar, the man who happily becomes Cathy's husband after she's given up hope of ever seeing Heathcliff again, and his vocal ability was commendable.

Isabella, who secretly longed for Heathcliff, was played with style by Hannah Dare, and I particularly enjoyed her song 'The Gypsy Boy'.

James Macdonald played a petulant young Hindley, setting the scene for the man he would grow into, and the characterisation of both young Heathcliff and young Cathy were handled well by George Edwards and Jessica-Mae Thompson. All three of them did very well in their roles.

The principals were strongly supported by the smaller roles and of course the members of the chorus. This was a show with plenty of chorus work and the chorus members appeared to be immersed in the action - lots of business and some wonderful facial expressions abounded!!

There were a number of songs that I felt were noteworthy. I've written 'a fabulous song Heathcliff and Cathy' the angry one – it was possibly in scene 10? The Gypsy Chorus was very good, happy and colourful and the choreography was entrancing. 'The Pleasure of you Company' was beautifully sung and the tune pleasing on the ear and I liked 'Liverpool' and the poignancy of 'I belong to the Earth.

Cathy's death scene was powerful as was the finale.

Choreography was good throughout and clearly well-rehearsed by the company. 'Life of a Gentleman' was notable with the movements as one.

Wigs were mostly fine and the hip pads were suitable for the era but Hannah's were worn too far forward.

Costumes were very attractive- loved the gypsy ones – but a couple of men wore trousers that were too long – Young Hindley and Lockwood.

Make up was fine. Cathy's changed noticeably from healthy young woman to a pale and sickly one toward the end. Hannah needed more blusher and brighter, red lipstick.

Sound, sound effects and lighting were very good and added to the overall presentation of the musical.

Your programme is nicely set out and informative.



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Congratulations to Ian Peters who I know had a great deal of work to do on the score, and teaching the music could not have been straightforward either, but the results were worth the hard work that he, Martine, Lorraine, Geninne and the whole company, on or back stage put into making 'Wuthering Heights' a piece not to be forgotten.

Thank you for inviting me to see the show and for your kind hospitality on the evening.

E. Gloria Smith

N.O.D.A. South East Regional Representative – District 12