

8TH – 12TH NOVEMBER
RHODA MCGAW, WOKING

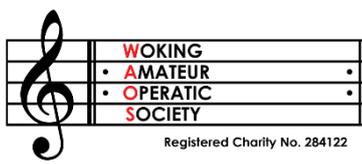
WAOS PRESENTS
THE WORLD PREMIERE OF

PRIDE
&
PREJUDICE
THE MUSICAL

BOOK, MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
LAWRENCE RUSH



EVENINGS 7:30PM
SATURDAY MATINÉE 2:30PM



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PRIDE & PREJUDICE – THE MUSICAL
OCTOBER 2016
WOKING AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY

It was something special to see a musical that had not been performed before and WAOS did a great job on the staging of this well-known story. Mike Bartlett and Mike Griffiths created a splendid set to depict the various rooms/dwellings and in doing so provided many different levels allowing for attractive stage settings. The Sitting Room was beautifully furnished although it appeared a little cramped when everyone was in it; then the three sisters seated behind the chaise-longue couldn't be seen. The projections added to the staging and were well chosen and the lighting was good. I thought that the garden one worked really well and it was easy to imagine the actors strolling through it.

The music was of course unfamiliar (although each time Mr. Collins came on stage there were a few familiar bars that sounded like a hymn) and for me was very much along the lines of Sondheim, especially in the first act. The cast coped well with the many musical numbers and rose to the challenge they presented. It was also a challenge for those in the audience who enjoy more predictable tunes. 'All I See' is a beautifully romantic song and for me was the musical highlight of the show. I also very much enjoyed the lively number with Lydia and the young men at the start of the second act. There is quite a lot of underscored dialogue and it wasn't always easy to hear as the orchestra was over amplified in the first act. Some of the performers could be heard clearly, notably Tim Beasley and Graham Kirby-Smith who both have excellent projection, and in the second act the sound was more balanced so it was easier to hear the songs and dialogue.

Mr. Bennet, the father of the five girls, (poor man surrounded by a house full of women!) was played sympathetically and credibly by Brian Higgs.

Sam MH is a confident performer and although I didn't feel that the role of Mrs. Bennet suited her so well as some of the others I've seen her take, I very much enjoyed her rendition of 'I'm Not Well'.

The daughters portrayed their different characters clearly and the two younger ones, Lydia and Kitty played by Beth Robinson and Sam Bottle were full of fun and both girls acted and sang strongly. Beth's dance routine with the soldiers was especially attractive.

Hannah Dare made a gentle Jane and her singing was good, but she needed to project a little more in her dialogue as some of it was very difficult to hear.

In her first principal role Victoria Percival proved an excellent actress as the determined, outspoken Elizabeth, her facial expressions were wonderful and her singing voice was good. I especially enjoyed the scene in the garden with Mr. Collins.

Samantha Sharpe came across pointedly as the studious and correct daughter in her debut role as Mary.

As Mr. Darcy Tim Beasley had a lot to live up to but he managed to do so extremely well - despite not emerging from a lake in a dripping wet shirt! His every word could be heard and his singing was commendable. He put lots of emotion into the musical numbers.

Graham has the gift of playing a variety of roles with apparent ease (he played a hospital porter turned pop-star in my last production with MMT)! and as Mr. Collins his acting and singing were, as always, impressive.

In the role of Wickham, the bad boy of the piece, Matt Gardener gave a commanding performance. His dialogue, acting, singing and dancing were praiseworthy.

The role of Mr. Bingley was played competently by Patrick Coad but I felt I'd seen him play other characters more convincingly than this particular one.

Gillian Freeman portrayed Lady Catherine nicely although a more elegant walk would have added gravitas to her portrayal.

Sonia Huntley- Robertson made a delightful Charlotte Lucas and acquitted herself very well in her first principal role.

The many other supporting actors all added to the piece making this into a well-rounded production.

Costumes on the whole were first class. The men all looked quite splendid but the daughter's costumes were not so flattering. I appreciate that they were not wealthy and so their day dresses would have been of cotton rather than brocade but, apart from Lydia and Kitty's ones, they were too tight across the bust. A patterned material, rather than a plain one, would have made this less obvious. Some ladies did not wear gloves in the scenes requiring them - namely the two Balls, and some of them were lacking in jewellery

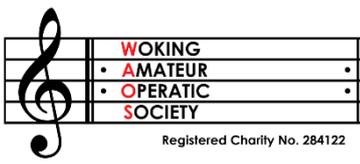
Hair styles and pieces looked suitable for the era and make up was fine except for Hannah who was far too pale and Sam MH who didn't appear to be wearing any at all. It is always a good idea for either the director or a designated person to check make-up to ensure some sort of uniformity on stage.

Tasha had worked hard with the talented cast to get the best out of this classic story set to music, and as musical director Paul Moylan controlled his musicians expertly. As I said earlier in the first act the music was a little too loud but the second act was perfect.

Choreography by Lorraine Landon was good and the dance routine in the Ball scenes was made even more visually attractive by using the different levels available on stage.

It would have been perfectly acceptable for one of the cast to wheel on the piano as the backstage crew weren't in costume and came on in lighting.

Sound was patchy in that Mr. Darcy was too loud and Jane couldn't be heard, but the rest of the principal's sound levels were fine. Lighting was good and complemented the show.



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The musical was rather too long (it was over three hours in length) and needed some trimming either in dialogue or musical numbers. This is no criticism of Lawrence's amazing talent in putting the story to music just a point of fact. The projected written words were on and off too quickly to read – possibly to speed up the time but a bit pointless if the audience were unable to read them.

It was an absolute pleasure to meet Lawrence in the interval and I can only imagine the pride he must have had seeing his work come to life on the stage.

Your programme is as always very well presented. The front cover is tasteful, the quality of the paper first class and the content interesting.

Thank you for inviting me to see *Pride & Prejudice – The Musical* and for your usual generous hospitality on the evening. I appreciated the opportunity to see something completely new. It was a challenge for everyone involved but I believe you should all be pleased with the results.

E. Gloria Smith

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