

Waos
MUSICAL THEATRE

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HIGH SOCIETY

Music
& Lyrics
by Cole Porter
Book by Arthur Kopit
Additional Lyrics by Susan Birkenhead

5th to 9th
November 2019

**Rhoda
McGaw
Theatre
Woking**

High Society is presented by arrangement with MusicScope and Stage Musicals Ltd of New York
Based on the play "The Philadelphia Story" by Phillip Barry. Also based on the Turner Entertainment Co. motion picture "High Society". Original Broadway
Production Produced By: Lauren Mitchell & Robert Gailus and Hal Luftig & Richard Samson and Dodger Endemmol Theatricals In association with Bill Haber.
Originally Produced by American Conservatory Theatre, San Francisco, CA Carey Perloff, Artistic Director. Heather Kitchen, Managing Director.



WOKING AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY

HIGH SOCIETY

NOVEMBER 2019

The musical 'High Society' – really a play with music - is based on Philip Barry's 1939 stage comedy 'The Philadelphia Story' from which a film was made in 1956. A number of Cole Porter's songs from other shows were added to the songs written for the film and the resulting musical premiered on Broadway in 1998, after first trying out in San Francisco the previous year. The run was short with only 144 performances. Five years later it opened in the West End in 2005 and was revived in 2015.

The impressive set, designed and constructed by members of WAOS, converted seamlessly from the exterior to the interior of the Lord's mansion. I liked the fact that the cast, as servants of the household, were used to accomplish the scene changes.

The opening number was excellent and every single person in it was smiling. Choreography throughout was good and the smiles were maintained by the majority of the dancers.

Having the orchestra raised at the back of the stage was a brilliant idea and Laura Brown's musicians were beautifully controlled - not at any time were they louder than the performer's voices. This is such a rarity and makes a world of difference to a production!

The song 'Little One' was nicely put across by Dexter and Dinah but seems to slow the pace of the show (and unfortunately, in this day and age, has rather an awkward feel to it) This comment is no reflection on either of the actors – it's a song that was written for the show - and so they sang it.

In the role of Dexter, Tim Beasley very much looked the part and his acting and singing complemented the role of the dashing ex-husband.

Amy Eloranta was super as Dinah and the song 'I Love Paris' – which was written for 'Can-Can' and sung with Tracy - was a highlight.

As the glamorous and pretentious Tracy Lord, Victoria O'Mahoney gave a good performance and 'True Love' at the end of Act One was beautifully acted out.

Possibly two of the best roles in the musical are those of Liz Imbrie and Mike Connor, plus they have one of the classics to sing in 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire'.

With a notable vocal range and first rate acting Jemma Western was exceptional as Liz.

Her partner in crime Mike, was the perfect character for Steve to play as he is such a natural comedian. His facial expressions were wonderful and his singing was good. The drunken scene with Tracy after the swim started off really well but it goes on for such a very long time and it did lose its comic value.

Keith as usual gave a secure and amusing interpretation, this time of Uncle Willie, and 'She's Got That Thing' was good. The dance by Zoe Davis (the young lady in the tutu) was delightful. However later on in 'Say it With Gin' I felt that the couple dancing did distract somewhat from Keith's solo.

As George Kittredge Graham was suitably stuffy and bourgeois and of course his singing was superlative.

Act Two opens with the exhausted maids waiting for the party to finish and their positioning on stage was particularly attractively set. It seemed odd though that the guests were still on stage whilst the maids were singing that they'd all gone home.

Roman Tough (I believe he was the young man in the red uniform) certainly deserves a mention. He acted confidently and moved well - he shows great promise for the future.

I'd not seen Cathy Chappell in a principal role before and was impressed with her performance as Margaret Lord, the matriarch of the upper class East Coast family.

Roger Thomas played her philandering but harmless husband Seth Lord soundly.

There was some interesting business of the servants setting the chairs for the wedding and 'Air on a G String' was a nice touch for the wedding too.

Overall the costumes were most attractive and suitable for the period, but a couple or more were too tight on the wearer, and Seth's trousers were too long for the wedding scene. Men wore braces at that time and they wouldn't have 'concertinaed' over his shoes. Hairstyles and wigs were suitable too.



Hannah acquitted herself well as director on this her first full musical show and the production came across as well plotted and rehearsed.

Lighting was good, as was the sound, and the props were well sourced.

Your programme cover is attractive – I like the yacht in the champagne glass – and is well presented containing all the information needed for the show.

Thank you for inviting me to see your production of 'High Society'. It certainly gave an insight into the antics of a family who consider themselves to be a cut above the rest, but who in real life are dealing with exactly the same problems as everyone else.

Thanks also to John who looked after me so well on the evening, and as always it was a treat to come on stage afterwards to meet the cast.

I wish you all at WAOS Musical Theatre a Very Happy Christmas and a theatrically successful 2020!

E. Gloria Smith

NODA South East Regional Representative District 12