

The Witches of Eastwick– Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society

Performed Thursday, Feb 27, 2014 at Civic Theatre, Chelmsford

Director – Sallie, Musical Director – Patrick Tucker

I wasn't sure what to expect having never seen this musical before but the pre-show publicity was certainly alluring and I had high hopes as I saw the foyer full of young people. I understand that the demographic mix of the audience was indeed younger than usual and this certainly bodes well for the future, assuming people enjoyed themselves. But how could they not? This production had all the ingredients for a winning recipe – sex, sass, wit, energy, colour and plenty of cheese (and hide the pickle!), not necessarily in that order. Unlike many, perhaps most, musicals which can seem contrived as random songs interrupt the flow of the script *Witches* seemed to flow effortlessly from script to song but particularly for the three lead women and Darryl himself. This may have been the strength of the material but I suspect that equally important was the emotional connection between the text and the heart. The three women were just so credible, individually and as a group. *Make Him Mine* was heartfelt and beautifully, yet simply, done while each of three seduction songs revealed a different motivation and a different character for each woman. I could wax lyrical about these women for a while but suffice to say that Wimbledon will never be the same again. Darryl was just hilarious; immaculate timing, witty dialogue and a glint in the eye that couldn't help but draw you to him. What the men in the audience would have given for a glimpse of his spell book and an ounce of his stamina! He also had great vocal mastery, which included the shouting, while his physicality when being tortured through the voodoo doll was very impressive.

The supporting cast were also strong. Felicia impressed mightily with her characterization but the song *Evil* was a tour de force while henpecked husband Clyde showed wonderful timing and delivery of his ripostes and asides. Michael and Jennifer provided a refreshing youthful innocence, which made *Dance with the Devil* such a surprise and so much fun. It was clear that the male ensemble loved this number since it was witty, clever and choreographed in a way that could be enjoyed by all. While all of the ensembles were well done -the *Dirty Laundry* scene was simple but effective – perhaps it is *The Glory of Me* that sticks in the mind. This number was so cheesey it was more like a fondue than a production number. I loved the way it kept building to be come more and more absurd.

What was apparent to me was that despite some beautiful backcloths and sets on trucks, all necessary to establish the mood, some of the most effective songs required little set at all. This was a tribute to the quality of the delivery and to its artistic and musical direction. What a thoroughly enjoyable evening. I can understand a committee having some discussion about the subject matter and some of the words but musicals don't have an obligation to be wholesome, just entertaining, which *The Witches of Eastwick* was from start to finish.

Reviewer – Stewart Adkins

Regional Representative – District 8

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