

Fiddler On The Roof - Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society at the Civic Theatre (26th February) 2010 Review by Cheryl Rogers

'Fiddler on the Roof' must be one of the greatest musical shows of our time. It has all the ingredients that make a fabulous theatre experience. It can make you laugh, it can make you cry, it can have your heart pounding with fear and it can give you a warm glow that comes from the feeling of being 'family'. To achieve all this you need a director who, in modern parlance, totally 'gets' the Jewish psyche and has the ability to pass this on to his cast, so that every character is believable. Without this, an audience will never be drawn into the drama that is being created on stage and in this show, more than most, it is essential to make this connection. How fortunate then for C.A.O.D.S. that they have a master of his craft, Ray Jeffery, to lead them by the hand as true 'Fiddler' tradition demands and bring this story to life with his superb direction.

It is expected that Tevye will steal the show in most productions but in this one the whole cast stole the show! With over fifty people on stage it was no wonder they sounded good and they *did* sound *so good!* The chorus numbers were exceptional. With a lovely score and harmony that isn't too taxing, this show is a great 'sing' for any amateur society and they gave it everything. The principal parts were well cast with a Tevye (Daryl Kane), who looked perfect for the part and has a big voice and his wife Golde (Lynette Sullivan) who was very convincing as the mother of the family, ruling her brood with a stern demeanour but wanting only the best for her children – she was a true Jewish Mama. The daughters, played by Sarah Barton, Robyn Gowers and Rhiannon Heap, were delightful - their rendition of 'Matchmaker' was great fun. There were so many other roles worthy of mention – the young suitors, Grandma Zeitel, Yente, Laser Wolf (finely played by Trevor Lowman), I could go on but suffice to say they all did so well.

Everyone looked natural and a little shabby as they should, with a minimal amount of stage make up and none of the fripperies that a more glamorous musical requires (and that this society can do so well when it is called for). The set was similarly minimal and the lighting very effective. I have tried to isolate my favourite scene from this production but it proved impossible - the opening sequence with 'Tradition', the wedding party, Tevye's dream, Chava's ostracism by Tevye, all worthy of first choice for me but perhaps I'm biased as I'm a great fan of this musical.

So, although this show has a more serious theme than others, still we trooped out of the theatre with 'If I Were A Rich Man', the stirring 'Tradition' and the haunting 'Anatevka' on our lips and with a feeling of pleasure that we have such a splendid, amateur theatre company in our own community.

Photo by Christopher Yorke-Edwards