

# Calendar Girls – CAODS, Chelmsford

## Review by TheatreLife

Based upon the true story of the Rylstone and District WI who in 1998 created a tasteful nude calendar to raise funds following the death from Cancer of the husband of one of their members. The story went national and then international. In 2003 a film adaption of the story was created and in 2009 it was produced as a film and then in 2012 Gary Barlow and Tim Firth began writing the songs for the musical version.

This is a story of heart, bravery and friendship with lots of humour and a fantastic score thrown in as well.

Leading this strong team of ladies was Christie Hooper as Annie and Diana Easton as Chris. Both these ladies were exceptionally well cast. Christie was able to share her pain and emotion with the audience through her fantastic acting skills and she sang so beautifully and Diana showed her wealth of experience in her stage presence and delivery. Both were top class performers.

The other amazing ladies with them were Caroline Escott as Ex Air hostess Celia, Debra Sparshott as single Mum and rebel Cora, Maggie Burgess as retired School Teacher Jessie and Stephanie Yorke-Edwards as nervous Vodka loving Ruth.

Caroline had all the poise and elegance for Celia and looked stunning on stage, Debra was spunky and her number 'Who Wants a Silent Night' with great fun, Maggie was suitable stern and Stephanie was so believable as the cheated upon wife and her number 'My Russian Friend and I' was so well delivered.

However huge kudos goes to all 6 of these ladies, as well as probably the most revealing of the night - Karen Whitehead and Caroline Froy as Miss Wilson (Tea) and Miss Wilson (Coffee) who stripped off for the calendar section of the show and their bravery was clearly appreciated by the audience.

The other parts were all also played so well there was not a weak one amongst them. Those that particularly stood out were Gareth Barton as John, Kevin Richards as Rod and Oli Budino as Lawrence. But I also really like Rachel Curren as Marie who used her acting skills to great advantage playing the traditional stiff stereotypical WI Chairperson.

The three teenagers in the piece Hayden Wagland as Danny, Wylie Queenan as Tommo and Charlotte Broad as Jenny had lots of the comedy in the show and were all on par with the adults.

This was a joy to watch, there were tears, laughter and a whole range of emotions in between. The orchestra was a great sound and support to the performers, the staging worked, the costumes looked great, and the props were amazing. In fact there was very little about the show not to like.

This deserved the standing ovation we witnessed tonight, Congratulations CAODS on such a wonderful show.