

Priscilla Queen of the Desert

DATE	28th September 2023
SOCIETY	Chelmsford Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society
VENUE	The Civic Theatre Chelmsford
TYPE OF PRODUCTION	Musical
DIRECTOR	Sallie Warrington
MUSICAL DIRECTOR	Rachael Plunkett
CHOREOGRAPHER	Sallie Warrington

Report

Author: Christine Davidson, NODA

Caod's have yet again surpassed themselves with their third excellent production in just one year. Choosing Priscilla Queen of the Desert while having experienced director and choreographer Sallie Warrington at the helm, really gave the audience a night to remember.

This show was a feast for the eyes with superb professional sets and costumes; huge wigs and massive footwear. How lucky to see this show in Chelmsford with such a stellar cast and crew. With such energy from a back stage crew helping to change sets and the huge array of beautiful costumes; the pace did not falter during the entire show. A fantastically drilled ensemble with great choreography and a set with a double deck bus, topped with a glittery shoe. Everyone was superb on the night, if I had to describe this huge show with one word, it would be amazing. You should all be very proud of your hard work and commitment to this production.

A great opening to the show with the three Diva's Keeley Denman, Diana Easton and Robyn Gowers flying from the fly tower with huge wigs, silver dresses and fantastic strong voices, their first song 'It's raining men' got the audience really singing and clapping along. Rotating the leads throughout the night with highly effective dance routines - they rocked!

The three drag Queens, Bernadette, Tick and Felicia the stars of this show were incredible. Each one had got their characterisations totally right with young Felicia spoilt, girly and a little bitchy. After seeing Tom Harper-Gray in many productions, it was a revelation to see him in this totally over the top sexy drag role. Boy can he dance!

Andrew Harding as Tick, the gay father of a young son, moved me to tears with his poignant song 'Always on my mind' when he sang to him after not seeing him for six years. A lovely moment. With beautiful vocals and a background in professional acting, he knew just how to use the stage. His young son Benji, in this performance (Leo Burdon) was a credit to the group with a clear singing voice and excellent acting.

Philip Gill as older drag queen Bernadette, looked absolutely gorgeous on stage giving us sharp one-liners with great comic timing but endearing us to the sad lonely person he really was. With a heart-warming performance throughout, the relationship he developed between himself and Bob, nicely played by John Sullivan, gave us the reason that both needed to be finally together.

Bob's wife, exotic dancer Cynthia (Frankie Mae) really showed her moves with the ping pong ball and her song 'Pop Music'; she was incredibly funny and sexy. Bravo for that performance!

Good cameo performances by Kieran Bedwell as Miss Understanding, Marion the mother of Benji (Caroline Froy) and Shirley (Stephanie Yorke-Edwards). All gave credible performances. So good was Stephanie in the role that I did not recognise her but her song 'I love the nightlife' was really funny, with the excellent acting we have come to expect from this lady. Well done to you all.

Wonderful music from the ten piece orchestra led by Musical Director Rachel Plunkett. Never once did they drown the actors on stage and definitely were superb on the night.

Thank you all so much for giving us, the audience a terrific night out and one that I will remember for a very long time. Congratulations to all.