

The open stage at the top of this show is so evocative of the stereotypical theatre we all imagine with the Ghost Light residing centre stage. As the hustle and bustle of the cast enter to 'Another Opening, Another Show', there were some great chorus characters here and it really set up the atmosphere for the whole show. The number was led by Hattie played by Diana Easton and her husky vocal tones were a perfect match to this song.

Playing the dual roles of Lilli Vanessi and Katherine was Nicola Harrington-Smith. She had all the fire of Katherine and a powerful singing voice to match. Playing opposite her was Gareth Barton as Fred Graham and Petruchio. They were a great pairing and played off one another very well. Gareth is a very strong performer with strong vocals and great stage presence. He has excellent diction and pathos and he mastered the original Shakespeare dialogue with aplomb. All in all he was a joy to watch.

Lois Lane/Bianca was played by Katie Doran. I loved her interpretation, a kooky and fun characterisation with good vocals. Her delivery of 'Always True to You' was great. Her three suitors – Kieran Bacon, Hayden Wagland and Thomas Harper-Gray worked well as a team and I loved how the Director Claire Carr put together their number 'Tom, Dick and Harry' making the choreography and their dancing comic and humourous rather than a straight dance number. It was genius and so funny.

The two Gangsters known as Man 1 and Man 2 were played by David Everest-Ring and Michael Bardo respectively. They found all of the comedy moments in the show but their number 'Brush up your Shakespeare' struggled a little and felt a bit shaky in places.

Kevin Abrey as Harry Trevor/Baptista was a solid and strong performer, Jonathan Davis as the General had all the pomp required in this part and Andrew Harding as Paul delivered the show-stopping 'Too Darn Hot' with some really fancy footwork.

The choreography throughout the show was top class and I would expect nothing less in a Claire Carr production. For me, Jobe Potter stood out in all the dance numbers but to be fair this cast had a plethora of really strong dancers both male and female.

I was expecting a particularly high standard of performance tonight not just because Claire Carr was the Director but because CAODS in general always deliver. I was not disappointed. The orchestra was excellent under the baton of Clare Penfold and the whole production sparkled giving us a hugely enjoyable evening in the theatre.