**NODA - NATIONAL OPERATIC & DRAMATIC ASSOCIATION**

**YOUNG HATS - BUGSY MALONE – 23rd March 2024 - Matinee**

I have to start by saying that this show has never been one of my favourites – guess I wasn’t keen to see youngsters portraying gangsters and their molls! However, I have been completely converted by having the opportunity of seeing these incredibly talented youngsters perform “Bugsy” in Herstmonceux Village Hall. It was an afternoon full of vim and vigour from these 10 – 18 year old actors and singers with lovely cameo parts from some of the youngest.

All the large cast (I counted from the programme that there were round about 65 parts, some members obviously taking more than one) gave everything in their power to tell the story in great fashion, together with those in the chorus. Great work with the splurge guns and custard pies - that must be very satisfying to do – I quite fancy it myself!

I’ve only got space to mention four of the main parts by name eg Bugsy Malone himself, Oliver Jaquet giving a smooth and very believable performance. Zoe Brewer played Blousey Brown delightfully and Henry Stevens was every inch a gangster as Fat Sam. Jamie-Leigh Jenkins certainly gave us the glamour required as Tallulah with every move she made.

The whole cast must have worked so hard to get to this very high standard under the expert direction of Director Joanna Stevens and that of Musical Director Linda Thompson. The Bugsy Malone Band led by Rachel Akehurst (keyboard and rehearsal pianist) with Lorraine Barry on keyboard 2, Louisa Patient – bass and Jason Smith on drums/percussion all gave great support to those on stage, never overpowering the singers. This can sometimes happen when accompanying, particularly when working with youngsters but it was certainly not the case in this instance. Director Joanne was also in charge of choreography which worked so well on the comparatively small stage. She was also responsible for the scenery/set design which was ideal, plus the hard work put in by the set construction team.

Those in charge of wardrobe are certainly to be congratulated on the costuming – great colours and the girls must have loved wearing those glamourous outfits. Everyone, even the “down and outs” were well supplied with just the right look.

The programme was well devised and it was good to see separate photos of each cast member. You never know, some of these faces may well be seen again in the professional theatre in the future.

All those concerned with the production are to be congratulated in whatever role they undertook – directing, producing, working backstage, front of house and all the many other necessary jobs that have to be carried out to make a successful show. Thank you for entertaining me on a cool and rainy Saturday afternoon.

Brenda Gower Regional NODA Representative

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