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HATS

'Me and My Girl'

Wednesday 10th November 2021

Herstmonceux Village Hall

Director: Chris Thompson and Linda Thompson

Musical Director: Michelle Radley

Choreographer: Linda Thompson

After such a challenging time from 'dark' theatre HATS did the audience proud. On waking this morning, I was singing 'Noblis Oblige' marching in time and breaking into a tap routine dressed in a resplendent ancestor's costume – all in my head of course! I do believe the whole audience will still be humming one of the perfect singalong tunes packed into 'Me and My Girl.' A great musical choice from collaborators Rose & Furber/Gay/Fry/Ockrent, which in fact very first opened in 1937! A tale of the cockney rightful Hareford heir being discovered and the determined efforts of his upper crust Duchess aunt to change him into a gentleman and his determination to keep his gal, Sal.

With a very warm welcome from HATS members and an introduction to Director Chris we took our front row seats. A good size stage well curtained with extended apron, steps to one side. Centrally set was a classic open topped vehicle which cleverly and neatly dismantled into suitcases. Experienced MD Michelle Radley sat centrally opposite, with keyboard, accompanied by keyboard musicians either side. Screens were rigged for percussion and brass, set in a smaller area opposite the refreshment bar and opened playing the jolly overture.

Set design, construction and painting was undertaken by Rob Moore, Ian Stewart, and Ruth Palmer, who with the addition of Dave Palmer doubled up as stage crew. Conventional double flats were either side with an impressive grand double door with steps, entrance into the Hall with family motto above together with well thought out additions for various cameo scenes all moved into place by crew and cast efficiently. Impressive ancestors' scene with three rolling library panels. Good furniture and appropriate props too. Sussex Events Limited provided the sound production supplying good sound levels particularly on personal mics and subtle lighting was created by Douglas Morgan and Gareth Butland.

Vocals were quality – clarity from both principals and ensemble exemplary with dance routines created by Linda smartly executed with great smiling when appropriate and all the hard work put in certainly paid off. As well as co-ordinated movement there was impressive spoonwork.

Sandra Watson and Sue Stewart did a sterling job providing such colourful, period costumes. Colour combinations particularly interesting in the ballet sequence with black/greens and finishing floral shawls. Beautiful pearly outfits for the Lambeth Walk – the red and black of

the Hunt Ball, sumptuous evening dress too. Smart maroon and white for the maids and elegant men's' livery. Attention to black character/tap shoes exceptionally good. I would have like to see the men's a little more polished though!!

Under the enthusiastic direction of Chris and Linda there was a great deal of attention to business created. Script ran smoothly and at pace. Tall Damon Willer played an athletic, cheeky, lovable Bill Snibson – a mammoth role with lyrical numbers, well-timed comedy, and some excellent footwork. Together with the petite Annalie Brown entering donning a charming red beret she sang with clarity, danced, and certainly they made a perfect pair, both with constant accents. The muddled history scene caused great amusement with good House of Lords' cloak edged with 'vermin' well manoeuvred, together with the wrestling tiger.

Also teaming well were Lady Jacqueline naughtily played by Joanna Stevens and after not having to seduce Bill set her hopes on young Gerald Bolingbroke jauntily played by plum speaking Oliver Albertella. An energetic 'The Sun has Got His Hat On' number.

The Duchess of Dene was played by Lucy Smith with the right air of pomposity who sang a strong 'Noblis Oblige' who eventually melted for Sir John who was secretly in love with her. Nicely portrayed by Dave Nicholles. Lovely tipsy business beautifully timed with Bill. Fast moving Stan Fillery gave a bustling Parchester, the family solicitor – notable 'Hop a little, skip a little and jump a little' etc.

Other named cameo parts were well characterised too and together with the energetic ensemble produced a most entertaining evening, and to all those helpers behind the scenes who worked so hard to come out of our theatre darkness thank you.

A précised report will be posted on the NODA website shortly.

Anne Lawson
NODA SE Representative
District 3