

THEATRE 2024

February 2024: BETTY BLUE EYES

With great anticipation, in view of previous performances by West Bridgford Operatic Society I went to see this musical toe tapping comedy. A friend who accompanied me described it as very amusing, played with energy and enthusiasm.

A great amateur production and the two main characters were quite professional especially the female lead. However, we thought that the story was silly and only those of the right generation would fully understand ration books and queuing for food. As ever WBOS seem to try and involve everyone in the group and you cannot fault their desire to give their all.

The second half was extremely well done, but overall it didn't match up to their wonderful efforts in the past.

I see they are performing *Guys and Dolls* later on in the year and I am sure this will be wonderful. One to look forward to!

Janet Whitchurch

April 2024: THE CHILDREN

The Playhouse describes this play as a "funny thriller". I didn't find it very funny - instead the constant intense, prickly atmosphere left me feeling exhausted. There were just three characters - a couple living in a coastal cottage and a surprise, uninvited visitor.

There were, for me, some puzzles. For example, was it important that there were two nasty nose bleeds, or that the husband came into the cottage riding a child's tricycle? Perhaps the biggest puzzle, though, was the title of the play. Maybe the plot was looking at how much one generation is responsible for the impact of their actions on the next generation - and that, of course, has implications for us today.

Carolyn Broadhurst

April 2024: A DOLL'S HOUSE

This recent adaptation of Ibsen's 150 year old play was excellent. The characters sprang to life on the stage in a complex and still relevant drama. We were lucky enough to be seated near the stage and the power and emotional force of the acting was almost overwhelming. The characters came alive in the small stage of the Lace Market theatre. The back drop projections of Scandinavian nature scenes give added depth and context to this wintry drama. Another triumph from the Lace Market!

Paul Martinez

May 2024: BROADCAST OPERAS

We to see broadcast operas from Royal Opera (at the Bonington) and the New York Met (Broadway).

Carmen was beautifully sung and acted in modern dress. The story of the gypsy temptress who chooses freedom at the cost of her death combined memorable tunes, high drama and tragedy. *Madama Butterfly* is a surprisingly modern piece (premiered in 1904) critical of the hypocrisy of an American naval officer who takes a Japanese wife only to cast her off when he returns home. Puccini's grand and poignant music, the acting and singing of the tragic heroine, left us all sniffing at the end.

Paul Martinez

May 2024: PUNCH

This must be the most powerful theatre I have seen for some time! An emotionally challenging play, brilliantly performed by six slick, energetic actors, smoothly role-changing, it thoroughly deserved the standing ovation from a packed Playhouse.

Based in Nottingham, the story is of Jason, a cocky teenager, out with his mates, Saturday night, Old Market Square, under the influence, when he lands a single angry punch with fatal consequences and received thirty months' imprisonment on manslaughter charges.

On discharge, Jason eventually, and courageously, agrees to meet the parents of the boy he killed. This seems to bring home to him the full impact of his actions and his life begins to change as he develops ambitions with education, career and relationships. There was warmth and humour in the play which left the audience with hope and positive feelings of the powers of restorative justice.

Carolyn Broadhurst

June 2024: STRANGERS ON A TRAIN

Strangers on a Train tells the story of two strangers; Charles a talkative, drunken psychopath with an overbearing father and Guy an architect who wanted to divorce a cheating wife. They met on a train journey and realise the only thing standing between them and their own happiness is a single adversary each. Charles suggests they exchange murders so that neither of them will be caught. Sounds simple doesn't it!

At first it seems to pay off when one murder is committed but as for the other it's a deal Guy never signed up to. There follows a broken web of deception which caused the formerly innocent Guy to fall into a fatal trap such that his life runs out of control.

This is a story of the inner battle of good and evil in all human beings which has to be food for thought.

But most importantly whatever you do don't speak to a stranger on a train or indeed any mode of transport!

Again an excellent production by the Lace Market Theatre team.

Janet Whitchurch.

July 2024: ABIGAIL'S PARTY

First performed in 1977 this is still a "must see" play, to be thoroughly enjoyed, reminisced over and lacking completely in violence and bad language. How refreshing is that!

Host Beverly (loud, opinionated and insensitive) prepares for the arrival of her guests. She and her husband Laurence are playing host to neighbours Angela, Tony and Sue. The alcohol flows and nibbles are handed round. To all of us who remember well it was an achingly funny example of British life in the 1970's.

Superbly cast and performed by members of the Lace Market Theatre this is a play which stands the test of time and remains so relevant.

Yet again full marks to the actors and actresses - and the ending was just brilliant. We left the theatre with a smile on our faces and full of feel good factor!

Janet Whitchurch

September 2024: MUMSIE

Mumsie is a new three-hander written by a young playwright who was in the audience. It was great seeing the acting close up in the studio of the Lace Market Theatre, and the subject matter was gripping: complicated relationships - granny, mum and daughter - as the daughter

prepares to give birth. Some of us really enjoyed the play but it wasn't to everyone's taste and some left after the interval.

Paul Martinez

September 2024: MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

Marriage of Figaro, in contrast, was loved by all who saw this broadcast Royal Opera production. The opera itself is delightful – complicated plot, acute social critique, three love stories and wonderful tunes. The production was fairly traditional, but so detailed and thoughtful that I felt I was *really* appreciating the richness of the opera for the first time. All the singers were great but special congratulations to the understudy who covered the role of Susanna.

Paul Martinez

October 2024: EVAN HANSEN

You could either describe Evan Hanson as an immature teenager, a society misfit, or a victim of circumstance. Whatever. He was socially awkward, fragile, depressed and vulnerable. To foster positivity, his therapist tasked him with writing himself a daily letter affirming "today is going to be a good day, and here's why....".

Sounds like a good idea, but one of his letters is found, and massively misunderstood, it causes Evan to invent lie upon lie. In this musical, arranged by the songwriters of *The Greatest Showman* and *La La Land*, Evan was brilliantly played by Ryan Kopel, on stage for almost the entire production.

All leading and supporting parts were excellently sung and choreographed, and the slick scene changes were remarkable. The Playhouse was packed and there was a huge standing ovation.

Carolyn Broadhurst

November 2024: TOSCA

Around 15 of us all told went to see the New York Met's *Tosca* at the Broadway. It was a truly moving experience. World class orchestral playing, singing and acting in a very emotional opera.

Paul Martinez

December 2024: A CHRISTMAS CAROL

This was a timeless play adapted for the Lace Market Theatre which I thought they did extremely well.

It certainly gave us a taste of Christmas spirit which we would all do well to embrace throughout the year especially with the challenging times we all face. Maybe we should all spare a thought for the hungry, cold and lonely.

I was certainly affected by the message given out by this play and the transformation of Scrooge. Despite the fact that there were many children in the audience (and in the play itself) they all behaved impeccably and the play held their attention. I had never seen the play before and only had a very vague idea of what it was all about but it's never too late and I thoroughly enjoyed the play and its message. Well done Lace Market yet again.

Janet Whitchurch

December 2024: JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

50 of us had a great time at the Playhouse Christmas panto. Oh yes we did!!

Excellent staging; entertaining direction, good acting. I thought the signing lady was brilliant, but one of our number thought her a distraction.

If I had realised where we were sitting, I would have taken climbing ropes, but none of our party complained!

Carolyn Broadhurst