



Society : Centre Stage
Production : Love Happens Here
Date : 21st February 2018
Venue : The Stockwell Playhouse
Report by : Tony Sweeney

Show Report

General

Centre Stage has for many years had a strong relationship with the LGBT community and this show was a joyous celebration of that relationship through a well thought out cabaret of songs. We were treated to a real smorgasbord of very talented singers who all worked hard with both familiar songs and some lesser known show tunes to give us an evening to remember.

The pre show announcement to turn off mobile phones was by and large complied with. These days it's very much a necessity to remind people to do so.

Players

A large cast of some 23 performed a wide variety of songs in a range of styles. With 28 different routines everyone had the chance to shine and they did.

Some of the highlights for me were the opening number where the whole cast filled the stage with an energetic and vibrant rendition of "born this way". Not only was this a great choice to kick things off but also set the tone for the whole evening.

Girl Crush a quartet of girls led by Camilla gave us some wonderful harmonies that helped give the song impact which worked well throughout.

Satellite of Love the classic Lou Reed song was performed beautifully by Alan and Kaylen. Alan's guitar skills were used throughout the show to good effect. Kaylen has an excellent almost operatic voice which perfectly suited the song. This was a true highlight.

Mamma Mia was another strong performance from the whole company full of energy and passion.

Get Happy the Judy Garland classic performed by Koralia and Kaylen in a soft manner was a fantastic blending of two very different vocal styles and this led to a subtle and memorable performance.

Come to Mama sung by Tessa was another strong song delivered by an excellent performer. Not just a piece of singing this was a real and striking performance that was the whole package.

Will I performed by the whole company was interesting because as well as singing the cast use BSL in unison to give the song an extra degree of depth.

I am what I am which is very much an anthem within the LGBT community was preformed well by Alexis, Barry, Emma and James-Lee. With four strong and sonorous voices adding to a truly poignant moment in the show. A real show stopper.

True Colours sung by Alexis with a gentle tone that showed real and raw emotion to show the songs real power. It was partly marred by a loutish young man in my row singing along loudly and rather badly which I couldn't understand.

Make your own kind of music the old hippy anthem from Mama Cass sung beautifully by Barry and Richard. The choice of song showed the parallels and the need for self expression at the heart of both the hippy movement and those of the LGBT community.

Somewhere over the rainbow another Judy Garland standard was delivered by the whole company who gave the song an added degree of emotion that summed up the whole evening's theme to perfection.

Director

Stuart James used the space on stage well with some nice dramatic moments between songs to help reinforce some of the key moments in recent LGBT history giving the whole show a more poignant feel raising it above a simple musical review. His choice of songs was quite interesting avoiding the more obvious numbers again giving the show a broader feel.

Musical Director

Gareth Heale led a small band located at the back of the stage again dressed in black they gave great support to the singers throughout.

Stage Management

The simple stage arrangement made stage management quite straightforward yet the logistics of moving such a large cast on and off the performance space were well worked out. The pauses between the songs acting as a natural break, ending one and helping the cast prepare for the next almost seamlessly.

Sound

The sound was clear and balanced enabling everyone to hear clearly. I was sat toward the back of the auditorium and had no difficulty enjoying most of the songs.

Lighting

Some good lighting effects were used to open the show and set the tone.

Make-up

The make up was done well and used to good effect. Rarely over the top is added to the shows impact well.

Props

The show used very few props which enabled things to move at a good pace. The use of chairs for some scenes worked well to create the right atmosphere.

Costumes

The simple use of black costumes meant the audiences focus was not diverted from the songs in this case an excellent decision. When some enhancements were needed these were done well and always in keeping with the overall theme.

Programme

Probably one of the simplest of programmes enabled you to follow the order of the songs and identify who did what. Well designed and compact it was a useful souvenir.

Front of house

The front of house box office was staffed by the venue and as you would expect they handled things very well. The ushers were members of the group and gave everyone a warm welcome. The use of numbered seats helped though it still amazes me how some people have difficulty navigating around such a basic layout.

Tony Sweeney

Regional Representative

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